

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING. BRADY, DETECTIVE S.

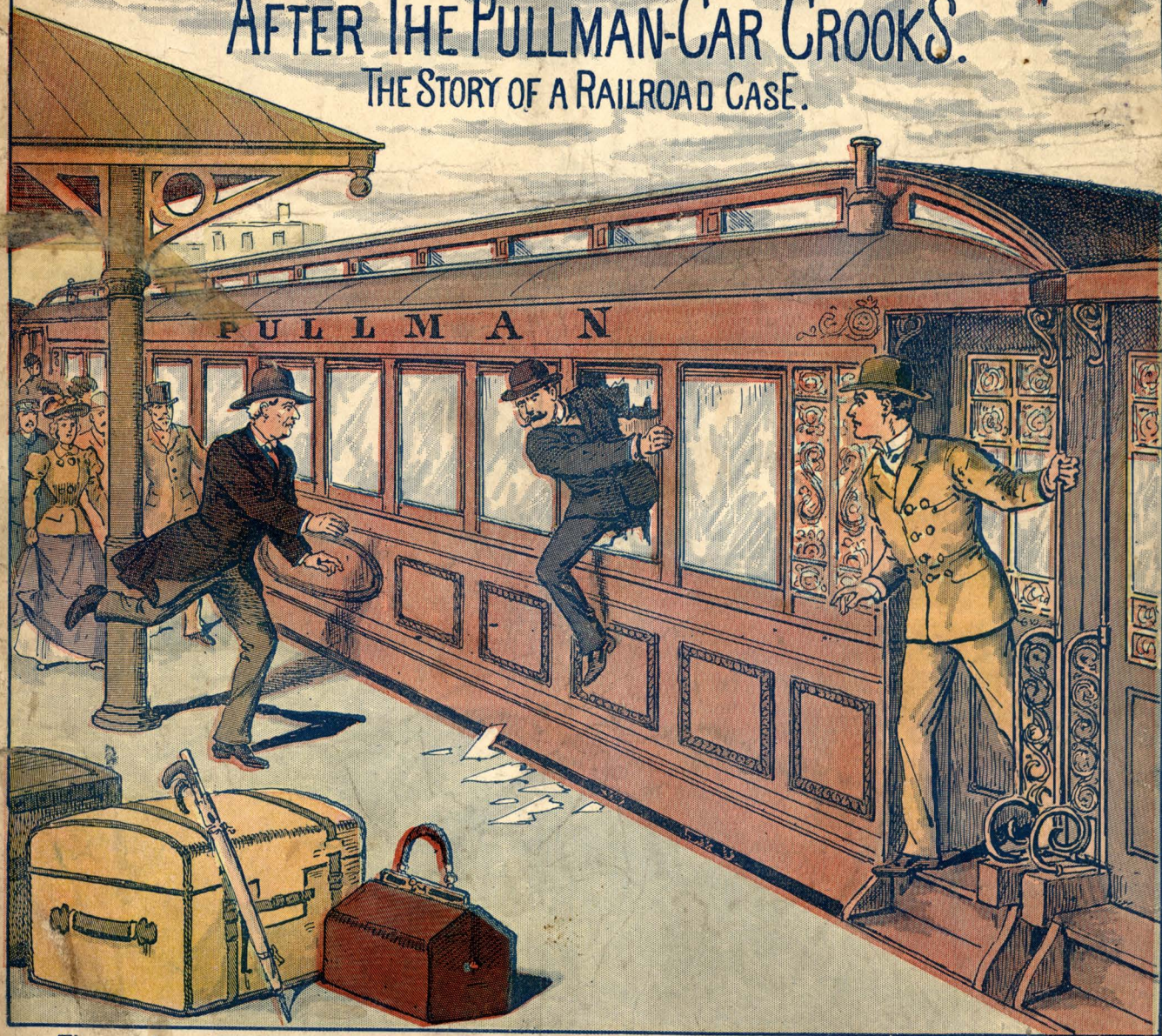
Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, by Frank Tousey.

No. 6.

NEW YORK, MARCH 3, 1899.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BRADY'S HARD FIGHT; OR AFTER THE PULLMAN-CAR CROOKS. THE STORY OF A RAILROAD CASE.



The crook made a bold attempt to force his way through the car window and escape. But a man came rushing along the platform. It was Old King Brady.

HOWARD WALKER - 92 W CONGRESS ST

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The Bradys' Hard Fight;

OR,

FTER THE PULLMAN CAR CROOKS.

A DETECTIVE STORY OF PLUCK AND PERIL.

BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE CASE AND THE DETECTIVES.

Many months, almost daily, complaints reached the ears of the Pullman Car Company in New York City of serious thefts committed in the palace cars of the company on the lines of railroad between New York and Albany and Chicago and New York and Boston. These lines seemed to be exempt from a distinct gang of thieves, who were so secret in their methods as to almost defy detection an impossibility.

In vain the railroad detectives had tried to catch the

They were able in every case to get away without leaving the slightest clew behind them.

People were robbed in their berths and even in broad daylight, and still the guilty parties could not be identified. Porters and conductors were suspected of complicity. This proved an exploded theory.

They were proven innocent.

Finally the fact became notorious that people could not travel on Pullman cars between New York and Bos-

harm the business of the company very seriously.

Many travelers who had not for years ridden in Pullmans chose seats in the ordinary coaches.

It might be expected, the Pullman Company was thoroughly stirred up over the matter.

Efforts were offered.

It was in vain.

The thieves became bolder than ever.

The precautions taken. Their system

was so adroit and so perfect that it seemed an utter impossibility to rout them out.

Thus matters remained for months.

The car company was in despair and ready to resort to desperate straits. But finally matters came to a head, as they are bound to do sooner or later in cases of the kind.

A wealthy resident of Montreal, Mr. Burton Branscombe, Honorable Member of the Dominion Parliament, took an evening train from Boston for New York.

He carried upon his person a large sum of money, fully forty thousand dollars in American banknotes.

This was known by his valet, Pierre Valois, a dapper little Frenchman, and his bankers in Boston.

At eleven o'clock Mr. Branscombe retired. At twelve everybody in that car was in his berth.

The porters swore to this fact.

Also the name and personnel of every occupant of the car was known. The doors were kept closely locked, and entrance could not have been effected in any other way.

Yet, when daylight came and the car stood in the Grand Central Station, Pierre Valois tumbled out of the upper berth with a yell of terror.

It aroused every one in the car.

Passengers sprang up half clad and the porters came hurriedly. The trembling Valois pulled aside the curtains to the berth in which his master lay.

The Honorable Mr. Branscombe had retired in the best of spirits and health but a few hours before.

He was now revealed to his fellow travelers as a ghastly corpse.

The position of his body showed a slight struggle. There was a swollen condition of the features, the tongue protruded, and the eyes were bulging.

The neck showed a livid circular mark, the deadly impression of the cord of the garroter.

The thug had done his work well and skilfully.

It was assumed that he had aroused his victim in searching for the money and in an extremity had assassinated him.

But who was the murderer?

Where was he?

Detectives quickly came.

All passengers were held in the car as suspects.

Investigations were carefully conducted. But they proved futile now as in the past.

Every passenger in the car proved his identity and cleared his skirts.

The porters could not be convicted of actual participation in the crime, or any connection with it, or culpable negligence of any sort.

The deeper the detectives dived into the affair the deeper became the mystery.

The passengers were allowed to go, and the murdered man's body was sent home to Canada. But the forty thousand dollars was gone.

This seemed to be the incident needed to bring matters to a culminating point. It was plainly necessary that something desperate in the line of action should be done.

So one day an advertisement appeared in the leading papers of the country.

"To Detectives—A reward of \$25,000 is offered by the undersigned for the arrest of the gang known as the Pullman Car Crooks, and who are responsible for the death of Hon. Burton Branscombe, M. P. Detectives or others interested may consult with me for the next ten days at the Fifth Avenue Hotel."

This was signed by the well-known owner of the Pullman coaches, Mr. George M. Pullman, himself.

It came to the view of the chief of the Secret Service. That shrewd gentleman was at once interested.

"There are two men in the Secret Service whom I would like to put on this case," he said emphatically.

"Who are they?" asked a friend.

"The Two Bradys."

"What? Old King Brady?"

"Yes; Old King Brady and his protege, Young King Brady."

Old King Brady had for years been known far and wide the country over as the prince of sleuths.

He had solved more cases of crime and brought more crooks to justice than any other living detective.

He was possessed of a remarkable personality. Tall and strongly built, he had features of that cast easily disguised or made up. He wore a tightly-buttoned long-tailed coat of blue material, and wore a wide-brimmed white felt hat. He was the synonym of terror to the evil-doer.

For the most of his career the old detective had worked alone.

His methods were peculiar, and he seldom sought companionship. But of late a young man of remarkable appearance had been seen in his company.

His name was also Brady.

But yet he was no relation of Old King Brady's. The name was a coincidence—nothing more.

But he had won the liking and interest of Old King Brady.

The old detective had made of him a protege, and the two traveled much together.

From Old King Brady the youth Harry Brady learned much. But despite this he had original ideas of his own.

For this Old King Brady admired him, for the old detective was by no means one of that kind of men who think no methods but their own can have merit.

Harry Brady soon began to gain fame for himself.

He made some really brilliant moves, and placed himself far above the ordinary rank and file.

He soon became known as Young King Brady, and was as popular as a detective could wish to be.

So when the chief of the Secret Service named the Bradys, he believed that he named the best pair of detectives in America.

For a long while he had seen or heard nothing of them.

But this was not strange.

Old King Brady was eccentric.

He seldom paid a visit to the office, and then only on urgent business.

"My time and your time is too valuable for social calls," he would say to the chief in excuse. "I will be in again as soon as there is something to report."

But as it chanced, the very day that the chief mentioned the Bradys in connection with the Pullman car case the door of the office opened and they entered.

The chief started up with joy.

"Gentlemen!" he cried. "I am glad to see you. You have come just in time."

"I knew that," declared Old King Brady laconically.

"You knew it?"

"Yes."

"How do you know it?"

"I know that you are interested in the Pullman car case, and you have thought of us in connection with it."

The chief was astonished.

"Are you a clairvoyant?" he asked.

"No, sir. It needs no clairvoyancy to read a little matter like that," laughed Old King Brady. "Candidly, I guessed it. We have been thinking of the Pullman case and we concluded you might want to see us in regard to it."

"Your conclusions were correct," cried the chief. "I believe you are the only men in this country fit to cope with this problem."

"Go easy!" laughed Young King Brady. "We are weak, and flattery is potent."

"I do not flatter," said the chief. "But, seriously, what do you think of the case?"

The two detectives exchanged glances.

"We have a theory," said Young King Brady.

"You have?"

"Yes."

"And you are interested?"

"Certainly."

"Good! I will send a messenger to Mr. Pullman. Will you wait?"

"Is it necessary for us to see him?" asked Old King Brady. "To tell the truth, we have done a little work on this case already. We are all equipped."

"As you please," said the chief. "I will explain it to Mr. Pullman."

The detectives arose.

"Don't hasten," said the chief socially. "Have a little chat. I suppose you do not care to expatiate on the possibilities of the case."

"Not at present," said Old King Brady dryly. "Wait till we have something to report."

"Ah, you shrewd fox!" cried the chief with a laugh. "Always reticent, you are, and fond of keeping others in suspense. Hello!"

There was a tap at the door.

Then it opened.

A fine-looking man stood on the threshold. His whole appearance betokened him a man of wealth.

"Mr. Pullman!" cried the chief eagerly. "Just in time!"

CHAPTER II.

THE CHIEF RECEIVES A SURPRISE.

Mr. Pullman, the magnate of the car company which bore his name, bowed in a courteous fashion.

He looked from the chief to the two detectives.

The chief at once said:

"This is fortunate. You have come just in time. Let me present to you Old and Young King Brady."

The magnate bowed.

"Ah, these are the Bradys of whom we hear so much!" he said. "Gentlemen, the honor is mine."

The detectives bowed, Old King Brady rather stiffly.

Mr. Pullman, however, did not seem to notice this.

He seated himself, and said:

"Well, Chief, are these gentlemen willing to undertake the case? Is the reward sufficient to induce them to do so?"

"I think so," said the chief. "I know that Old King Brady never shirks a case whether there is a reward or not."

"We will not consider any reward which you may offer, sir, as the only incentive," said Old King Brady. "But we propose to bring the Pullman car crooks to justice."

Mr. Pullman arched his brows.

"I am glad to hear that," he said. "Of course you have already laid some plans?"

"Yes; some!" said Old King Brady, with emphasis on the last word.

"Ah," said the magnate slowly. "Tell me what you propose to try first. Perhaps I can make suggestions."

Old King Brady was silent.

He looked steadily at the magnate from under the brim of his white felt hat.

"If I were to tell you," he said, "you would know what to do, wouldn't you?"

The chief was startled.

He stared at Old King Brady.

It looked as if the magnate and the detective were not going to hitch. This disturbed the chief.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you evidently do not understand each other."

But the magnate smiled.

"Pardon me," he said urbanely. "I no doubt asked too much. But, you see, my desire to bring the gang to justice makes me perhaps over-zealous."

The chief looked at Old King Brady.

He expected a concession from the old detective now. But it did not come. He was glum and reticent.

Young King Brady had arisen and was looking out of the window. Once he made a secret signal to his colleague.

Meanwhile Mr. Pullman and the chief chatted pleasantly and exhaustively on the salient points of the case.

"If I may be permitted, I would like to make a suggestion to Mr. Brady that he disguise himself as a conductor," said the magnate. "I will furnish him a position on a car, and the right to temporarily supersede any other conductor on any other car."

"I will accept that concession," said Old King Brady quietly, "when you show me that you have the right to make it."

The words were spoken clearly, sharply and concisely.

They smote strangely on the ears of the chief, but comprehensively on the ears of the magnate. He gave a sudden start, and a purplish flush overspread his face. The chief looked half angrily at Old King Brady, for the remark was rude.

"Pardon me," said the magnate with dignity. "I will make no more suggestions. Chief, I am still at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. Let me know the earliest developments."

"I will do so, Mr. Pullman," said the chief, with a puzzled, angry glance at the Bradys.

The magnate arose and strode toward the door.

But Young King Brady glided forward and stood with his back to it.

He stood there with a mocking smile on his face.

His right hand came up and in it was a revolver. The magnate looked into the tube.

"What is this?" he demanded, sternly. "Who are you to treat me thus?"

"Who are you?" asked the young detective.

"Who are you?" echoed Old King Brady as he drew handcuffs from his pocket. "Mr. Pullman, we are very sorry, but we want you badly."

The magnate turned deadly pale. He seemed disposed to struggle, but the revolver quelled him.

"Curse you!" he gritted.

But Old King Brady laughed and slipped the handcuffs on Mr. Pullman's wrists.

The chief was stupefied.

The old detective turned.

"Chief," he said, "you have a telephone. Ring up the

Fifth Avenue Hotel and ask Mr. Pullman to come to headquarters."

"Mr. Pullman!" gasped the chief.

"Yes."

"But who is this man?"

"Sly Jimmy Clark, the slickest sneak thief and thug in America. Eh, Jimmy? Is not that a compliment?"

With which Old King Brady plucked the English siders sometimes worn by Mr. Pullman from the crook's face.

The chief was nearly overcome.

He could hardly collect his senses sufficiently to ring up the telephone call. The sequel was brief.

Mr. Pullman, the genuine, was located at the Fifth Avenue. Mr. Pullman, the pseudo, was taken to the Tombs for safe keeping.

"One of the gang in limbo," declared Old King Brady with satisfaction.

"And you knew him at once?"

"The moment he came in the door."

"But his make-up——"

"It was superb."

"It deceived me. What do you think his purpose could have been?"

"A very clever one," replied Old King Brady. "Simply to learn from us what our plans would be. He would then easily post his pals."

"Whew! He had a crust, didn't he? Why, it was walking into the den of the lion."

"They're all crusty fellows, as you'll find. Do you recall who had the berth next to the Honorable Burton Branscombe that night?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"Why, Senator Clarke, from Washington."

"Senator Joseph Clarke?"

"Yes."

"He proved his identity?"

"He did."

"And went scot free!"

"What do you mean?"

"Just this: Senator Joseph Clarke, from Washington, was not alive at the time he was supposed to be in this car. He had been dead and buried a month."

"Whew!" gasped the chief. "Is that the truth?"

"Absolutely!"

"But men who had known him in the Senate identified him then and there."

"Of course they did—just as you identified Mr. Pullman a few moments ago."

"Enough!" gasped the chief, dropping into his chair. "Go ahead, Brady. I've nothing more to say. You'll get there, I'll wager my life on it. I believe you could solve the mysteries of the Hindoo Nirvana!"

Old King Brady deprecated this statement.

"There is no trick about it," he declared; "a simple deduction of facts, that is all. We have to conclude that the assassin of the Hon. Mr. Branscombe slept in the next berth and played a terrible game of bluff."

"Have you learned anything more?"

Old King Brady smiled peculiarly.

Young King Brady laughed.

"Don't ask for too much, Chief," he cried. "We'll report later."

"One word," said Old King Brady. "Don't let it leak out that Sly Jimmy has been arrested."

"All right," agreed the chief. "I will remember it. Let me hear from you again soon."

The Two Bradys left.

A week passed.

During this period at least nothing was heard from the Pullman car crooks.

It was possible that the capture of Sly Jimmy had given them a scare and they were keeping low.

But the Bradys had got onto their system, which was more than any other detectives had done.

It was the practice of one or more of the gang to make up or impersonate some prominent and well-known man and secure berths in the Pullman.

Then in the night, at a proper moment, they would, with the aid of chloroform or other drugs, first make helpless their victims and then rob them.

Behind the long curtains which screened the berths their opportunity was of the best.

In the morning when the crime was discovered the thieves themselves would be the last to incur suspicion.

But now a pair of sleuths than whom there were no shrewder were on their track.

So the Pullman car gang were on their guard, as might be imagined.

The Two Bradys seemed to have dropped from sight altogether.

But one day a stylish carriage drove up to the Grand Central Depot.

A richly-dressed lady got out.

She was of the ultra-fashionable class. She was escorted into the depot by a lackey in livery, who carried her wraps and traveling bags.

At the office of the Pullman Car Company she lifted her veil and asked in a musical voice:

"I would like a berth, lower, please, for Boston on the eleven o'clock express."

"Yes, madam," replied the clerk. "Name, please?"

"Mrs. William Van Ness."

The clerk wrote out the berth check and took a hundred-dollar bill for changing. He knew that the woman before him was one of Boston's richest society leaders.

She placed the change from the hundred-dollar bill carelessly in a chatelaine bag and turned away.

It was too early, of course, to take the train. The wraps and traveling bags were placed in the check-room ready to be taken aboard the car as soon as the train was ready.

Mrs. Van Ness went back to her carriage.

"The park," she said to the driver. "I must have a farewell drive in the dear old park. Then to Sherry's for dinner."

Lounging in the waiting-room was a stylishly-dressed young man.

As Mrs. Van Ness bought her Pullman car ticket and

bustled through the waiting-room, his eyes were constantly upon her.

He even was behind her when she crossed the sidewalk to her carriage.

Half way there she dropped a prettily-bordered lace handkerchief.

Instantly the young man pounced upon it and carried it to the carriage door.

"You have dropped this, madam," he said, lifting his polished silk hat.

She blushed and gave him a pretty glance.

"I thank you," she said.

Then the door of the carriage closed and she was whirled away. But the young man repeated her orders:

"At Sherry's for dinner. That is two hours from now."

CHAPTER III.

THE MEETING IN THE PARK.

"At Sherry's for dinner!"

The young man repeated this.

Then he looked at his watch.

It was four o'clock.

It was a beautiful autumn day. He looked up at the cloudless sky and drew in a breath of the salubrious air.

"A good day in the park," he said, "a very fine day."

The carriage of Mrs. Van Ness had not yet turned the corner of Fifth avenue.

By the curb was a hansom cab.

The young man beckoned to the driver. The door opened and he leaped in, first saying:

"Follow that carriage. Keep in sight, but never get too near."

"All right, sor!"

The cabby cracked his long whip and the pursuit began.

Up Fifth avenue the chase went at a leisurely pace.

Into the park gates at Fifty-ninth street the carriages rolled and along the Mall drive.

They threaded their way through the fashionable labyrinth of equipages until finally Mrs. Van Ness' carriage drew up near a walk which led to the cave.

Here Mrs. Van Ness alighted.

She looked furtively around, as if to make sure that she was not observed.

The cab was some distance away.

The young man spoke to the driver through the top and it turned into a side avenue.

He leaped out.

"Wait here until I return," he said.

Then he vanished into the shrubbery.

Skirting a grove of small pines, he climbed a little eminence. From this he had an extended view.

And now he saw that Mrs. Van Ness had crossed a plot of green and, passing through a trellis of clinging vines, in an unobserved spot was talking with a man.

At that distance the young man could see that he was flashily dressed and stout in person.

But he did not know him.

Mrs. Van Ness did not remain very long in conversation with the unknown.

She evidently finished her business with him very quickly, for she soon turned and walked back to the carriage.

She got in and was driven away.

The young man looked at his watch.

"Sherry's at six," he muttered.

Then he watched the man.

He walked rapidly along to the west and turned into an avenue which led out very near the cab. The young man at once retraced his steps.

At the cab he said to the driver:

"Walk your horse. You will see a man in a light plaid suit in this drive presently. Keep your eye on him and if possible keep in sight of him."

The cabby nodded.

He looked keenly at the young man.

"Straight goods?" he asked. "You're one of the peelers?"

The young man smiled and drew back his coat lapel and showed a star.

It read, "Secret Service."

The cabby grinned.

"I'm the man fer yez!" he said. "I've done this thing afore!"

"All right," said the young detective. "Let us see how you'll keep up your record."

And Young King Brady, for he it was, leaped into the cab.

The driver proved a shrewd fellow.

He walked his horse leisurely. The detective had drawn the blinds closely. The flashy man had appeared in the drive just ahead.

He glanced at the cab, but did not appear to regard it with suspicion.

He followed the drive until it reached the main avenue. Then he emerged from the park onto Eighth avenue and boarded a downtown car.

It was easy for the cab to keep in sight of this until Forty-second street was reached. Then the flashy man changed cars for the crosstown line.

At the Grand Union Hotel he alighted.

He entered the hotel.

Young King Brady now left his cab, after giving the driver a good, liberal fee.

He strolled leisurely into the hotel and turned the leaf of the register. He saw the name:

"Carter Fairfax, Washington, D. C."

Now Young King Brady knew that Carter Fairfax was a Congressman and a prominent member of the Ways and Means Committee of the House.

He knew him by sight and smiled.

The flashily-dressed man could hardly be classed with men of the stamp of the Hon. Carter Fairfax, of West Virginia. At once Young King Brady knew that he was on the right track.

He knew the pseudo Congressman to be no other than Charlie Dunn, commonly known as "Handsome Charlie."

He was a prince among pickpockets and confidence men. "Whew!" thought the young detective. "He is surely in deep water just now. He is playing a heavier game than he used to."

The young detective consulted his watch.

It was half-past five.

"Dinner at Sherry's at six," he said. "I have just time."

There was no object now in following Handsome Charlie further.

The detective knew where he would find him next. He felt sure that the eleven o'clock express would take Carter Fairfax and Mrs. Van Ness, or Slippery Meg Mullins, on to Boston.

For the woman he had shadowed and who was masquerading as the wealthy Mrs. Van Ness was the slickest woman criminal in New York.

She had figured in many hard games, but none deeper or more dangerous than this deal with the Pullman car crooks.

Slippery Meg had served time in Sing Sing. Yet she was not an old woman, for her entrance into criminal circles dated from tender years.

She was of that type of beauty which captivates by a certain irresistible magnetism.

She could by a few swift changes so metamorphose her personal appearance and features that her identity could hardly be guessed.

No detective could excel her in the art of disguise.

And, indeed, Young King Brady had not been sure of her until he had followed her into Central Park and observed her meeting with Handsome Charlie Dunn.

Then he knew her for Slippery Meg.

The young detective wondered why she had gone to Sherry's.

Was she to keep another appointment there with a brother crook?

If so, he was anxious to know who this was and what the game was.

So Young King Brady called a cab and started for Sherry's.

In his dress of the fashionable young man he would never have been recognized, not even by an intimate friend.

In due time the cab reached Sherry's.

The young detective alighted.

He passed into the place.

It was thronged with fashionable men and women. He passed through and seated himself at a small side table.

From this point he could easily see all in the place and note who passed in or out.

He had not long to wait.

A lady came bustling in.

She seemed familiar with the place and seated herself at a table just opposite Young King Brady.

She gave him only a cursory glance.

Then she called for a dainty menu and proceeded to partake of it. But the young detective noted one fact:

Her eyes were constantly fixed on the door. She was watching and waiting for some one to come.

Who could it be?

The young detective wondered.

But in a moment a tall, distinguished-looking man entered.

He wore glasses and a long mustache and side whiskers.

He was evidently a magnate of some kind. His gaze roamed over the place. He seated himself at the very table at which Mrs. Van Ness sat.

He also ordered an expensive dinner and proceeded to eat it.

But he politely avoided any notice of the lady opposite, as a well-bred man ought to do.

But she kept her gaze fixed upon him in a strange, fascinated way.

Young King Brady noted this.

He smiled, and there was a reason for his smile. Suddenly affairs took a different turn.

A trim, fine-looking young man suddenly came in at the door.

He looked about the place and then eagerly approached Mrs. Van Ness.

His face was smooth and his hair of curly auburn hue. He was dressed in ultra-fashionable style.

He walked quickly up and, lifting his hat, said profusely:

"Oh, Mrs. Van Ness, I hear you are going back to Boston to-day."

"That is true, Reginald Morton," said Mrs. Van Ness, engagingly. "So good of you to remain and say good-by. Stop and dine with me."

"Really, I am awfully sorry, but mother is waiting for me, and dinner is ordered at home. You will excuse me? I will hope to see you at the Symphony in Boston next week. Mother sends her love."

"Good-by, Reginald."

"Good-by."

Young King Brady could have screamed with laughter.

He knew that Reginald Morton was one of the brilliant society young men of Gotham.

This fellow who impersonated him to the deception of every other person in the room Young King Brady knew well.

His name was Martin Mock.

He was the most cultured and consequently the slickest of all the crooks. He was a college man.

The pseudo Mrs. Van Ness finished her dinner with assumed unconsciousness of the fact that every eye in the room was curiously turned upon the fashionable Mrs. Van Ness, the society leader.

Suddenly the tall, distinguished gentleman opposite her dropped his knife and fork and, bowing suavely, said:

"Pardon me, but have I the honor of addressing the wife of my very dear friend, Roland Van Ness?"

"That is my husband's name," faltered the charming lady.

"My card, with your permission. Were Roland Van Ness here he would tell you that he counts among his friends none truer or nearer than Colonel Philip."

The name on the card was:

"Colonel August Philip."

Mrs. Van Ness blushed prettily and sweetly replied:

"I am pleased to know my husband's friend. I think I have heard him speak of Colonel Philip."

"It must be so. Did I understand that you are going to Boston to-night?"

"I am."

"I am bound thither myself by the eleven o'clock express."

"Why, that is my train. We shall be fellow-travelers, then."

"That will be pleasant indeed," said the gallant colonel. Then for a while the conversation languished.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BRADYS GET LEFT.

Young King Brady noted all this and heard the most of the conversation.

He smiled quietly.

But now Mrs. Van Ness and Colonel Philip arose from the table. The colonel very gallantly escorted Mrs. Van Ness to the sidewalk and handed her into her cab.

She was driven away.

Young King Brady now stood at Colonel Philip's shoulder.

He slapped him familiarly on the back.

"Hello, old pard!" he said, with a jolly laugh. "Everything is working well."

"Why, Harry Brady!" said the colonel in a changed voice. "I thought you would give me away at the table there. You looked at me so steadily."

"I couldn't help it," laughed Young King Brady. "You missed your calling. Your make-up and acting was perfect. I thought it really was Colonel Philip back from Manila, and not Old King Brady, the detective!"

Old King Brady, for he it was, only shrugged his shoulders.

"I had to play it perfect," he said, "to fool her. But if you think I acted my part well, what do you think of her?"

"She is a peach, to use slang."

"Indeed she is. If she turned her wits the right way she could be a star at anything. A smart woman, Harry."

Young King Brady laughed.

"I believe you're smitten," he cried.

"This is no time for levity, Harry," said the old detective. "There is warm work before us. Before we get to Boston we must bag the whole gang."

"I have seen Handsome Charlie."

"You have?"

"Yes. He is masquerading as the Hon. Carter Fairfax. He will be on the same Pullman with her and with us!"

"Good! Do you know the game?"

"No."

"Well, I'll tell you."

The old detective drew out his notebook. He scanned it.

"Here it is," he said. "Mrs. Chester Merington, of Boston, will occupy berth No. 8. Her maid will sleep in the upper berth. Mrs. Merington carries with her the diamonds she wore at the last grand opera. They are valued at sixty-five thousand dollars."

"Quite a rich haul!"

"Sure!"

"Have you an inkling of the game?"

"I have an intuition."

"Ah? What is it?"

"I think that Slippery Meg and Handsome Charlie will handle the job. Martin Mock and Joe Bentley will remain in New York to look up fresh game."

"Ah, I see."

"I think the trick is for Mrs. Van Ness and the Hon. Carter Fairfax to approach Mrs. Merington during the trip and endeavor to get chummy on the score of Fairfax's acquaintance with her husband."

"The old gag!"

"Sure! But this time there will be another active factor."

"And that is——"

"Colonel August Philip."

Young King Brady laughed.

"Fighting fire with fire!" he cried. "Well, you're on the right track. You will be in at the death, too."

"Sure! You see, when Mrs. Merington wakes up the next morning to find that she has been drugged and her diamonds are gone, she nor nobody else will ever think of associating Mrs. Van Ness or Carter Fairfax with the deed."

"Or the stately Colonel Philip."

"Certainly not. But Colonel Philip will play his hand——"

"Assisted by Mr. Allan Morris."

"Yes, on the arrival of the train in the Boston depot. What a surprise it will be to Slippery Meg and Handsome Charlie to have the masks torn from their faces."

"Indeed it will."

And the two detectives chuckled and laughed over the prospect. It seemed like a sure thing.

There were yet many hours before eleven. So the pseudo Colonel Philip asked his friend, Allan Morris, over to his room at the Hoffman to pass away the time.

And they went thither.

But as they left Sherry's a finely-dressed man stood in the shadows by the door and watched them.

He was the young man, Reginald Morton, who had rushed in to say farewell to Mrs. Van Ness in behalf of his mother.

Martin Mock, the crook, which was his true character, watched the two detectives narrowly.

Then he drew a deep whistle.

Turning, he vanished down the street.

Old King Brady and Young King Brady spent some time at the Hoffman.

Their plan to entrap the Pullman car crooks was cleverly laid.

It did not look as if it could fail.

They finally left the Hoffman in good season to catch their train.

At the Grand Central Depot they called for their berth checks in the Pullman car. Then they looked about the depot.

But nothing was seen of Mrs. Van Ness or Carter Fairfax.

The detectives walked out on the platform. The train was just beginning to move out.

They hastily leaped aboard the rear car. The train got well under way and was speeding through the tunnel before they reached their own car.

As the tall Colonel Philip and the natty Allan Morris entered the Pullman the occupants regarded them idly. The detectives feigned to ignore everybody.

But in reality they took in the personnel of every person. They were given a surprise.

Mrs. Van Ness and Carter Fairfax were not present. Mrs. Merington and her maid were, though.

The detectives exchanged glances.

"What's the matter?" asked Old King Brady.

"Something's up."

"Are they onto us?"

The detectives sank into their seats and waited.

Presently the conductor came in.

Old King Brady caught him.

"How is this?" he asked. "We expected to meet a couple of friends on this car. I am sure they purchased berths."

"I fear they were left," said Young King Brady.

"What are their names?" asked the conductor, drawing the list from his pocket.

"Mrs. Van Ness."

"Carter Fairfax."

The conductor ran a finger down his list.

Then he nodded.

"Yes," he said, "each of those people engaged berths. But they countermanded the order and the berths were sold to other parties."

The two detectives were astounded.

They exchanged glances.

"I like that!" said Young King Brady, as the conductor passed on.

"We have been fooled!"

Indeed it looked so.

It was easy to understand.

In some way or other the birds had got the alarm and dropped the game. They had got onto the detectives.

Just how the Bradys were puzzled to know.

It was a keen disappointment.

They were leaving New York at a mile per minute gait. There would be no stop short of Bridgeport.

But Old King Brady said:

"We will go through to Boston in our present characters. We must not drop the pretence, for they may be watching us."

This was the proper thing to do.

But Young King Brady was chagrined.

"I don't see how they sized us up," he said. "Somebody must have followed us to the Hoffman."

"Well, we may find something up in Boston," said Old King Brady. "A bad beginning may make a good ending. So the detectives settled themselves down for the ride."

Just back of Old King Brady the seat was occupied by an old lady in black, whose face was veiled.

Opposite her was a seedy-looking man, evidently from the rural districts.

Mrs. Merington and her maid retired to their berths before the train reached New London. A short time afterward all the others were retiring.

The detectives did the same.

Old King Brady was tired.

He slept soundly.

He occupied the lower berth. Young King Brady was above. They were astir just as the train entered the Boston depot.

But as the train began to come to a stop Old King Brady suddenly opened his nostrils wide to a peculiar faint smell in the air. It was unmistakable.

"Harry!" exclaimed the old detective.

"Well?"

The young detective tumbled out of his berth.

"Do you smell anything?"

Young King Brady gave a start.

"Chloroform!"

In an instant Old King Brady made action. He rushed to the little room at the end of the car.

"Porter," he said sternly, "lock the car doors. Chloroform has been used in this car, and robbery has been done."

"Lor' sakes, massa!" ejaculated the negro.

"Do as I tell you."

The order was obeyed.

Then the conductor was called. He went to the curtain which hung across Mrs. Merington's berth.

She was sleeping soundly.

The odor of chloroform was strong.

"Wake her up!" said Old King Brady. "You'll find the diamonds are gone!"

It was not easy to arouse Mrs. Merington. The drug had been potent. But presently she awoke and sat up.

In response to questions she looked for her diamonds. But they were gone.

A sensation was created.

The robbed woman began to grow hysterical, which was also partly the effect of the drug. She screamed wildly.

Of course everybody in the car was aroused. But nobody was allowed to leave.

"Robbery has been committed in this car," said Old King Brady, "and every person here must submit to a search."

The detectives searched the car and the travelers. For an hour they worked, but no trace of the missing diamonds was found.

The people in the car, none of them were thieves. They could prove their identity as respectable citizens.

"Queer!" muttered Old King Brady. Then, like a flash, an idea came to him.

"Conductor," he asked, "what was our last stop?"

"Providence."

"Did anybody leave this car?"

"Yes, massa," replied the colored porter; "an old crippled-up woman and a countryfied lookin' man. Dey didn't do it, I reckon."

"They were the thieves," said Old King Brady, positively. "They are beyond reach now."

"And worked the job right under our noses," whispered Young King Brady.

"Fooled again!" muttered the old detective; "but this is the last time. I might have seen through it all, but I was dull. The old woman was Slippery Meg and the man was Handsome Charlie. They have beaten us."

CHAPTER V.

THE CHIEF GETS ANXIOUS.

It was indeed a clever trick of the Pullman car crooks to countermand the order for berths in the names of Carter Fairfax and Mrs. Van Ness, and then reappear in a different character and hire them over again.

It was a simple trick.

Yet it had fooled the two sharpest detectives in America. The Bradys were staggered.

They had never before received such a dose as this. It seemed almost incredible that they had been so easily duped.

But it was true.

Mrs. Merington's diamonds were gone. A slick job it was.

But momentary defeat never depressed Old King Brady.

It only spurred him on to redoubled effort. He knew the crooks were in Boston and he would track them.

So the detectives gave Mrs. Merington this assurance and left the train.

They went at once to Boston headquarters and stated their business. Then detectives were stationed everywhere. Every effort was made to catch the thieves.

But in vain.

The Boston detectives were assumed to be familiar with all the resorts for crooks in the Hub. But they could find no trace of the Pullman car gang.

Neither could the Bradys.

They were finally compelled to admit that they were beaten. There was nothing to do but to return to New York.

And they did so.

Again they dropped out of sight.

And so did Slippery Meg and her gang.

The report of the robbery of Mrs. Merington created a sensation.

The chief of the Secret Service threw up his hands in despair.

When Mr. Pullman called on him he said:

"Well, they are invincible, then, if the Two Bradys cannot handle them. But I still believe that they will."

"I hope so," said the Pullman car magnate, skeptically.

"They are a bad lot."

But a couple of weeks passed and no account was heard of further robbery by the gang.

The Pullman car people had begun to flatter themselves that the crooks had taken fright, and Mrs. Merington's experience would terminate their adventurous work.

But this was a false sense of security, as exciting events were destined to prove.

The first incident was a most surprising one.

An officer from the Tombs called on the chief of the Secret Service.

"The confidence crook, Sly Jimmie, has given me a letter for you," he said. "What do you think of it?"

The chief looked surprised.

"Sly Jimmie?" he asked. "Why, he was one of the Pullman car gang, wasn't he?"

"That's true."

"Perhaps he wants to peach."

"Perhaps so."

The chief broke the seal.

Thus the note read:

"Chief of Detectives:

"Dear Sir—I am a lame duck just now, and I'm sick of everything. I want to break away and live a new life. If you'll give me a chance I'll turn over a new leaf and do better. Maybe a word or two from me will put you on the track of Meg and the others. I know where they are just now and what the new lead is. If you'll do right by me I'll give it to you straight. But you must never let them know how you got it, or they'd kill me.

"Yours anxiously,

JIMMIE."

The chief smiled.

"Do you think he is sincere?" he asked.

"The warden thinks so," replied the officer.

"I'll go over and see him."

And the chief did so.

He learned that which decided him at once to find the Bradys. But after many futile efforts he called in another detective, whose name was James Hogan.

"Hogan," he said, "I want you to go West on a ticklish mission."

The detective nodded.

"All right, sir."

"At noon on Monday a returned Klondike miner named Abram Patterson will leave on the Pullman car Algonquin by the twelve o'clock train for Chicago.

"The Algonquin is one of the cars of the fast Empire Express, and no stop will be made between Albany and Buffalo. The next jump will be Cleveland and the next Chicago. You understand?"

"I do, sir."

"Well, it is known to the Pullman car crooks that Patterson will carry thirty thousand dollars in a satchel. With this money he is to pay for real estate bought in Chicago. Now, you must shadow Patterson."

"Yes."

"Don't lose sight of him. Watch everybody connected with him. You will surely place the gang or its ringleaders. As soon as you have them spotted stand in with the conductor, and when the train reaches Cleveland hold the doors until the car is searched.

"The crooks will get on, one at Albany and one or two at Buffalo—two men and a woman. Between Buffalo and Cleveland it will be a night run. It is then that they are to do the job. See?"

"I see," replied the detective. "Shall I depend on the local police at Cleveland for assistance?"

"You ought to handle them all right alone, after you have them located. Of course the train hands will assist you. You can take the next train back."

Hogan was exuberant.

He recognized the fact at once that this was a big job and would not doubt win him much fame.

For to claim the credit of capturing the Pullman car crooks would be a rich thing for any detective.

He at once took a train for Albany.

It was Saturday, but he would be able to devote the intervening period until Monday noon in clever work about Albany.

He reached Albany in due time.

He went at once to the Delevan House.

Hogan registered, and as he did so a tall man of aristocratic appearance stood at his shoulder.

He wrote his own name on the register and Hogan, much impressed, glanced at it:

"Daniel Francis, Denver, Colorado."

The detective had seen that name many times. He knew of Daniel Francis, of Denver, as one of the silver kings of the great West.

But this was not all.

With Francis was another man, who wore a thick suit of clothes of some rough goods and sported huge diamonds on his fingers and shirt front.

The two wealthy men appeared to be very friendly, and Francis, first sending his baggage up to his room by the porters, adjourned to the barroom.

Hogan followed and was so impressed by the appearance of Francis' companion that he took an opportunity to ask a bellboy who he was.

"That bloke?" replied the bellboy. "Don't ye know him? Why, he's a Klondike prince, he is. Rollin' in money. His name's Patterson."

That settled it for Hogan.

He had hit upon his man.

Hogan thought he was making a record, sure. He already began to see his name in print as the man who bagged the Pullman car crooks.

Patterson and Francis were together much of the time until Monday. Then Hogan made the discovery that both were going to Chicago by the noon train.

But though Hogan had located the victim of the proposed robbery, he had not succeeded in getting track of the crooks.

All his efforts were in vain.

However, he reflected that they would be aboard the train, and he believed he could locate them there.

Hogan was a fairly good detective.

But he was not in the same class with the Bradys.

His great fault was that he lacked method. He was diligent and a faithful worker, but that was all.

So he waited until train time and then followed Francis and Patterson to the depot.

In due time the Empire Express came rolling in and the Pullman car Algonquin was hitched onto the rear of the train.

Hogan walked along the platform behind Francis and Patterson. Suddenly the latter entered the waiting-room.

No sooner had he disappeared than Francis turned and fixed his gaze upon Hogan. The detective was startled.

He saw that the Colorado mine owner was beckoning to him.

"Come here, Hogan," he said.

The voice sounded familiar.

"You know me?" he gasped.

"Of course I do. But I hardly think you know me."

"You are Daniel Francis, of Denver."

The other laughed quietly.

"That will do, Hogan," he said. "I am satisfied if I have fooled you. Go back and tell the chief that it is all right and the Bradys are still in the game."

Hogan was stupefied.

"Old King Brady!" he finally gasped.

"Now you've hit it right," said the old detective, blandly.

"You are the dead image of Francis, the silver king. Does Patterson know you?"

"No; he thinks I am Francis. But it is to save him I am masquerading. You understand? You can do nothing here now."

"I had better go back to New York?"

"Yes."

Hogan shook his head ruefully.

"This is no case for me," he said. "You are the only man heavy enough to handle it. I wish you success."

"Thank you."

"One question!"

"Well?"

"Where are the crooks?"

"They have not showed up yet. Young King Brady is on this train and he has his eyes on them."

"How many are there?"

"Three."

"Two men and a woman?"

"Yes."

"Good-by," said Hogan, holding out his hand with a sickly smile.

"Good-by. Tell the chief not to fret. The crooks will never get away from us. We'll get them!"

Hogan went back to New York.

When the Empire Express rolled out of Albany, bound for Buffalo, in the Pullman car Algonquin were a number of distinguished-looking passengers.

Mr. Patterson sat beside Mr. Francis. They were apparently warm friends.

Just back of them sat a lady.

She was deeply veiled and much engrossed in the scenery as the train rushed on.

Across the aisle from her sat two well-dressed gentlemen.

One had white hair and wore gold-barred eyeglasses.

The other was younger and had the appearance of an invalid and a cripple. He used a crutch.

Some ways further back near the door sat a young man with all the appearance of a dude.

He wore a monocle and had light yellow hair and sported a light overcoat.

It was Young King Brady himself in disguise. The two detectives once more had track of the gang.

CHAPTER VI.

THE AFFAIR IN THE SLEEPING-CAR.

This time both believed that they could hang on to their birds. They felt sure they could not give them the slip.

For both were certain that their disguises as Francis, the silver king, and Mortimer, the dude, were not penetrated by the crooks.

In this event the crooks should fall easily into their hands.

The detectives, however, had not yet located the trio of rogues.

Young King Brady suspected the veiled woman, but he did not particularly reckon upon the white-haired man and the one with the cane and crutch.

But both detectives reckoned upon different procedures now.

They already had the Pullman car porters and the conductor posted. They were sure of their assistance.

Buffalo was reached in due time.

After leaving Buffalo, at a proper hour the passengers began to retire.

The porters proceeded to make up the berths. Young King Brady was one of the first to retire.

But not to sleep.

Through the curtains he kept a close watch of the veiled lady, for he felt quite sure of her.

And this led to a clew.

For he saw her make a signal to the old man and the cripple. It was answered.

"Ah!" muttered the young detective. "There are the birds. Now I have them!"

Meanwhile Old King Brady, as Francis the silver magnate, had bidden Patterson good-night and got into his own berth.

Later Patterson also retired.

But the two detectives did not remove their clothes. Neither did they sleep.

A short while later every berth in the car was occupied.

Everybody had retired.

The porter turned down the lights, as was the usual custom, making it dim in the aisle.

The train boomed on.

But Old King Brady lay with his eyes glued to a crack in the curtain.

So did Young King Brady.

They had every passenger placed and knew which occupied each berth. Particularly they watched the berth occupied by the veiled lady.

Her berth was next to that in which the cripple had stowed himself away.

After a long time the curtains of the veiled lady's berth moved. The detectives watched intently.

Presently her head appeared between them.

She looked up and down the aisle.

Her face was plainly revealed.

The detectives recognized her as no other than Slippery Meg Mullins. For some moments she looked and appeared to listen.

Then her head was withdrawn.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed.

The detectives wondered.

But suddenly Meg's curtains again moved. Once more her head was thrust out. She again looked and listened.

Then the curtains of the cripple's berth were gently parted and he crept out into the aisle.

He seemed to have no need of crutch or cane now. His hat was off and his features were easily recognizable.

He was no other than Handsome Charlie.

The detectives, lynx-like, watched.

Handsome Charlie stood a long while in the aisle and listened.

The porter, with his companion, was back in the smoking compartment, oblivious of matters in the main part of the car.

It seemed reasonable that everybody in the car was asleep.

The curtains of a third berth moved and the white-haired old gentleman emerged. But without his white hair and his glasses it was easy to recognize him as Martin Mack.

The three crooks exchanged conversation in the deaf and dumb language.

A detective not familiar with this language is not in it a little bit. But both the Bradys were.

They easily read the conversation.

Thus it ran:

Martin Mack: "The coast is clear."

Slippery Meg: "You know where the Klondiker sleeps. No use to bother the other jay."

Martin Mack: "No."

Handsome Charlie: "Shall I work the job?"

Slippery Meg: "Yes, you're the lightest. Look out ye don't wake him. Put the chloroform to him liberally. Don't be afraid."

Handsome Charlie: "All right."

Mack held the bottle and a piece of lint. Handsome Charlie crawled stealthily under the curtains.

Young King Brady drew himself up and placed a hand on the edge of his berth. He was ready for action.

Now, next to the sleeping victim's berth was that of the white-haired man, or Martin Mack. Handsome Charlie, with a keen-bladed knife, easily cut the attaching cords and the curtains parted.

There in the berth, on his side, Patterson, the Klondike king, slept soundly.

It was but a moment's work for Handsome Charlie to take the chloroform from Mack. Another moment and Patterson and his money would have been at the mercy of the crooks.

But just as handsome Charlie leaned forward to give the stupefying dose to his man an unexpected thing happened.

Down from the berth above, and which was occupied by Francis, came a long, powerful arm.

It caught Handsome Charlie by the windpipe and held him as in a vise. He could not move.

There he hung with life and light leaving him, while his eyes bulged and his tongue protruded.

Being under the curtains, his predicament could not be seen by his companions.

His senses left him. Then, when fully unconscious, the talon fingers relaxed and he tumbled in a heap into the aisle of the car.

The effect of this upon his companions was thrilling.

Martin Mack instantly pulled back the curtains and looked into the berth. But he saw only the sleeping form of Patterson.

He made a deaf and dumb explanation to the woman, Slippery Meg.

"He got a whiff of the chloroform," he said. "I'll do the job."

He picked up the bottle and the lint and parted the curtains stealthily. But as he did so he chanced to glance upward.

It was his salvation.

He saw the great talon-like hand coming down toward him. Instantly in the briefest kind of a flash the truth dawned upon him.

It is needless to say that Martin Mack acted quickly.

He knew the game was up.

For back of that hand was Old King Brady's stern face. Down from the berth came the old detective.

Out sprang Young King Brady.

Both rushed toward Mack.

"Give up!" cried the old detective. "You are cornered."

"Never!" yelled Mack, with a curse as he pulled a revolver and fired point blank at Young King Brady.

With a gasp the young detective went down in a heap. Mack sprang over his form like a frightened antelope.

Old King Brady sprang after him like a hound.

But Slippery Meg was not idle.

The very instant she saw the game was up she sprang up on the edge of her berth and pulled the signal cord which notified the engineer to set the air-brakes.

Instantly the whistle of the locomotive sounded and the train began to come to a jarring stop.

Of course every person aboard the car was awakened. Men sprang out of their berths in their night-clothes and the alarmed cries went up:

"What has happened?"

"Is it a collision?"

"Who fired a pistol?"

Old King Brady was chasing Martin Mack and could give no explanation, of course. Young King Brady lay unconscious in the aisle. Handsome Charlie had recovered and was arising to his feet.

It devolved upon Slippery Meg to give the sort of explanation she pleased.

"I don't know," she cried. "I think there was trouble between two passengers. They shot this man."

Then she gave the signal to Handsome Charlie, and they went for the other end of the car.

The train had come almost to a stop.

It was easy for Meg and her companion to gain the platform and leap off. It was a lonely spot and they vanished in the darkness.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the train, Old King Brady and Martin Mack had been having a lively time.

Grief and rage filled the breast of the old detective when he saw Young King Brady fall.

He was resolved that Mack should not escape. After him like a panther he went.

Mack met the colored porter, who might have stopped him, but the wily criminal cried:

"Look out for yourself! He is a madman! He is insane! Run for yer life!"

Now, if there is one thing a coon is afraid of it is an insane person.

The porter looked at Old King Brady.

The old detective might well have been taken for an insane man. His face was contorted with fury.

That was enough for the porter.

He dodged for the outer door of the car.

He flung it open and Mack sprang through. Then the colored man did the same and closed the door in the detective's face and locked it.

The detective, in impotent fury, flung himself against it.

"Open it, you fool!" he roared. "That man is a crook! I am a detective! He will escape!"

But the porter was not to be so easily deceived, as he fancied. He still held the door.

While Mack leaped from the train and vanished into the night.

The train had now come to a stop.

The train hands and conductor were running forward to see what the trouble was, while the engineer was looking back to see why he had been signaled to stop.

But Old King Brady by this time had convinced the porter of his mistake.

He showed his star and the colored official was induced to open the door.

But of course it was too late.

The three crooks were beyond pursuit.

Had it been daylight this might have been different. But in the darkness it was almost impossible to pursue them.

Of course matters were quickly explained to the train men.

A sensation was created when it was known how near to

a robbery Mr. Patterson, the Klondike millionaire, had been.

Young King Brady escaped death by a literal miracle.

It was found that the bullet of Mack's revolver had simply grazed his forehead, producing temporary insensibility, but nothing worse.

The detectives were defeated.

Of course they were disappointed.

Mr. Patterson was astonished to find that, after all, he had been in company with a disguised detective and not his friend Francis.

But when he learned how narrow had been his escape, and that it was the detective who had saved him, he cried:

"It's all right. I wish you were still my traveling companion in your own character. I shall write Francis about this, and he will be surprised, I can assure you."

A good laugh resulted.

But there was serious work ahead for the Two Bradys.

CHAPTER VII.

TRAILING IN THE DARK.

Of course the train men were in a hurry and would not hold the train longer. The Two Bradys had but a few moments in which to decide what to do.

They decided to leave the train.

They were assured that the crooks, with a woman in their company, would not be able to travel very fast.

To be sure, in the cover of darkness it would be hard to get their trail.

But daylight was not far away.

Some clue must be found.

Somebody would be sure to see them somewhere and give information to the detectives which would lead to good results.

So the Bradys let the train go on and trusted to their ability to trail their birds in the darkness.

"Hard luck!" said Young King Brady. "They seem to get the best of us. It is what we might call a hard fight."

"A hard fight," agreed Old King Brady.

"What do you reckon they'll do now?"

"Make across country."

"You don't think they'll stick to the track?"

"No."

"You may be right."

"I believe I am."

The younger detective disagreed with the elder on this point.

"I don't think you are," he said.

Old King Brady was surprised.

"You don't?"

"No."

"You have a theory?"

"I have."

Old King Brady smiled.

Yet he knew that Harry was oftentimes acute enough to see a point which even he had overlooked.

So he was patient.

"Well, Harry, what is it?"

"Judging the rascals by their usual methods, they will not keep together.

"Ah!"

"They will separate for the present; if they have reason to believe that we are on their track, more particularly so."

The old detective was struck with the logic of this assumption.

"On my word, Harry," he declared, "that is very good reasoning."

"Yet very simple," said the young detective, modestly.

"Each may go a separate way. In that case it will be difficult to track them."

"We shall have to separate."

"Surely."

They had been walking along the track in the darkness.

Suddenly Old King Brady halted.

He pointed at a light far away.

"There is a light," he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"Probably a dwelling."

"I should say it was a small town," said Young King Brady, who had gone a few steps further. "See, there are many lights."

This was true.

They were approaching some sort of a collection of dwellings. It was probably some small town on the local line of trains.

The detectives were undecided what it was best to do.

It was by no means certain that the crooks had gone in this direction. Again, it seemed more than likely that they would avoid any small town.

But something must be done.

They could not very well remain where they were. Some sort of a clue must be followed. After a few moments of indecision Old King Brady said:

"Let us go on."

So they kept on down the track.

Presently red lights were seen.

They were approaching a station.

And now Old King Brady came to a halt. He began to remove his disguise.

"We might as well appear here in our true characters," he said. "There is no reason for concealing our identity."

"Surely," agreed Young King Brady.

So they became once more, so far as personal appearance and identity went, plainly the Two Bradys.

Nearer they drew to the station.

This was seen to be a half mile or more from the town.

As they stepped upon the platform, which was deserted, they read the name over the waiting-room door in the glare of the red light:

"Smallville."

It was a place neither had ever heard of before.

They looked into the waiting-room.

It had only one occupant.

This was the station agent.

He nodded in a familiar way and said:

"Next train in twenty minutes. Leaves here four twenty a. m."

"It is four o'clock," ejaculated Young King Brady. "Morning is near at hand."

Old King Brady approached the station agent and in a low tone asked:

"Has anybody been here within an hour?"

The fellow regarded him curiously.

"Not a soul," he said; "but a fellow crossed the platform not half an hour ago. I was putting out the signal."

"Ah!" said the old detective, casually. "What did he look like?"

"Rather stout. Seemed in a hurry and, a queer thing, he had no hat on."

The detectives exchanged glances.

"Thank you," said Old King Brady.

"Which way did he go?" asked Young King Brady, carelessly.

"Over toward Smallville."

"That is all. Thank you."

The detectives turned to the door.

The station agent's curiosity overcame him. He followed them.

"Friend of yours?" he asked in a familiar, quizzing way.

"A slight acquaintance."

The fellow grinned.

"How did he get out?" he asked.

"Out of where?"

"Oh, I'm no fool. Don't you s'pose I know a lunatic when I see him? I reckon you're keepers from White's Asylum."

"All right," said Young King Brady. "Don't give it away; and look here!"

"Well?"

"If that fellow comes back here entice him into your ticket office and hold him till we come. Will you?"

The station agent was tickled.

"I'll try to," he agreed. "I reckon he won't git away."

"He's a smooth talker and also very violent. His appearance would deceive you in regard to his sanity."

The station agent tossed his head.

"Don't you fret," he said. "He'll never get away from me. I'll hold him for keeps."

"We will pay you well."

"Don't ask no pay."

"All right. We're going over to the town now to look for him."

"I hope ye'll have good luck."

"All right. Thank you."

The detectives left the station.

They started along the highway.

Smallville was half a mile away.

Already the faint light of dawn was beginning to appear in the east.

Daylight would soon come.

"There is no doubt but that fellow was Handsome Char-

lie," said Old King Brady. "But if he shows up again at the station you may depend upon it he'll walk into a trap."

"It will surprise him."

"Well, I should smile!"

"But he may get the best of the station agent."

"I doubt it. He is a strong fellow. Besides, Charlie will suspect nothing. However, we may find him in the town."

"At least we are on his track."

"Sure!"

Now that they were approaching the town the detectives proceeded cautiously.

Nobody was as yet astir in the little place. It was a very small town with one principal street.

A few stores were there, huddled together. The rest of the place was made up wholly of residences.

The detectives with great care picked their way along through this street. But they saw not a trace of Handsome Charlie.

They then reached a conclusion:

Either he had gone on to the next town or he was hiding somewhere in the vicinity and waiting for daylight.

Old King Brady was inclined to the former belief.

He thought of Slippery Meg.

He knew she could not tramp across country any great distance. Her forte would be to wait her chance on the railroad.

So he believed that sooner or later she would turn up at the railroad station.

It was possible Handsome Charlie would do the same.

Doubtless his errand to the town might be for the purchase of articles of disguise. If he was hatless, as the station agent said, here was a full explanation.

What had become of Mack could only be guessed.

It was probable, however, that for the sake of safety he had gone in another direction and separated from his companions.

So after all these deductions Old King Brady arrived at this conclusion:

It would be better to shadow the town in the early dawn. Handsome Charlie might appear there.

Later it would be well to return to the station, for Old King Brady felt sure that he would find Slippery Meg there sooner or later.

All this was shrewd work.

How accurate Old King Brady's prognostications were we have yet to see.

The two detectives therefore hung about the town until long after dawn.

They shadowed the stores.

They watched the streets.

People soon thronged both places. Teams came in from the country, and the little town became quite lively.

Suddenly Young King Brady clutched the old detective's arm.

"Sh!" he exclaimed. "There he is!"

"Where?"

"He has just gone into that store."

"Did you see him?"

"Yes. He had no hat, and dodged out of the crowd into the place. He is our man, for sure."

Old King Brady looked at the store.

It was like all country groceries. There were two large show windows and a door between them.

What the rear entrance or exit was the detective did not know. He did not make any account of this.

He believed that he could hold his bird by coming in upon him unawares.

So he said to Young King Brady:

"Remain here. If he gets by me, you can nail him!"

"All right!"

This was all very explicit and looked very easy. Old King Brady made a dive into the store.

What followed was very thrilling and furnished the little village with town-talk for a year.

As Old King Brady entered the store he saw his man.

He was at a counter engaged in buying a hat of a wondering clerk, who could not imagine where this strange customer had dropped from.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STATION AGENT FURNISHES A CLEW.

Handsome Charlie was naturally impatient at the slowness of the clerk in the country store.

"Any kind of a hat!" he cried harshly. "Don't you understand? The wind blew mine into the river. Hurry up! Pass it down, for I'm in a hurry."

"All right, sir."

The clerk passed out a hat.

"Here is a derby, size seven and one-eighth."

"That's my size. Take it out of that," said Dunn, throwing down a ten-dollar bill.

He put on the hat.

The clerk stared at the bill.

"I don't know as I can change it," he said. "I'll see."

He turned to the cash drawer.

And just at that moment Old King Brady entered the store.

But the crook saw him through the glass door. In an instant he made startling action.

Escape in that direction was of course blocked.

Handsome Charlie had no idea of being caught. He knew what it would mean.

A term in State's prison was something he was not desirous of incurring. So he was ready for any kind of a desperate move.

And the move he made was desperate.

Swiftly his gaze took in the appointments of the store. The back of the place was filled with barrels and bales.

Where the back door was he could not see. But there were stairs leading up into a loft.

He gained these as Old King Brady opened the door.

The old detective saw his legs vanishing into the loft.

Without pausing to explain to the astonished clerk, he dashed for the stairs.

When he reached the loft he saw a skylight in the roof open.

Through this the detective dashed.

He looked out upon a sloping roof. A strong lightning rod extended within reach to the ground.

This was vibrating, and the detective knew that the villain was descending by it, though the eaves hid him from sight.

Old King Brady was ready to grasp the rod and descend by it himself, but at that moment it gave way and went clattering down.

Had it broken before, Handsome Charlie might have been badly injured. But as it was, he only got a slight fall.

Now, Young King Brady was watching in front of the store.

But he was unprepared for this sort of a development.

As a result, Handsome Charlie got out of the yard on that side of the store and reached the street some distance below before the young detective saw him.

Of course Young King Brady gave chase.

But the crook had a big start.

Near the church were a number of public hitching posts. To these several horses were hitched.

One of them had a saddle on his back.

Nobody was near to prevent, and quickly the crook untied the rein, leaped into the saddle and dashed away.

Only a cloud of dust was seen far down the road.

Pursuit was useless.

Old King Brady now came up.

He was deeply chagrined.

"Well, this does beat all!" he exclaimed. "He has got away again."

"He is a hard one," said Young King Brady.

"I should say so. On my word, Harry, this is the hardest fight I ever had in my life. Everything goes against us."

"The tide will turn soon."

"I hope so."

"What shall we do?"

"That is the question."

"Shall we chase him?"

"It's of no use."

The owner of the horse now came up, frantic with rage. When the detectives explained matters to him he was by no means mollified.

But Old King Brady said:

"I don't think he will keep your horse. He will make use of it to reach a point of safety. That is all."

"If that is all," declared the owner, "and he turns the beast adrift, he will come home of his own accord."

"I am sure that is what he will do," said the detective.

But the owner of the saddle horse secured another animal and rode away down the road in pursuit.

Old King Brady now said:

"But come! We have nothing to gain here. Let us go down to the station."

Accordingly the two detectives trudged back to the station.

The agent met them eagerly.

"Your man didn't come," he said. "But there was a woman here, and I'll wager she is from the asylum too, for her dress was torn in shreds, and she had no hat, either."

"A woman!" exclaimed Old King Brady.

"Yes."

The two detectives looked at each other.

Each exclaimed:

"Slippery Meg!"

The station agent grinned.

"Well, she did look slippery enough," he said. "I'd 'a' held her, but you didn't say anything about a woman."

"That's right," said Old King Brady. "We never thought of her. Which way did she go?"

"Off toward Pinkneytown, over yonder. She went into the woods and out of sight."

"Did she say anything about returning?"

"Well, I reckon she means to."

"Why do you think so?"

"She asked about the express from Calhoun City."

"Ah! Does that stop here?"

"The engine takes on water here."

"Did she want to take that train?"

"She didn't say; but she sent a queer telegram to Calhoun."

"A telegram?"

"Yes."

The station agent rubbed his hands and grinned. He knew he had something to talk about now.

It is hardly necessary to say that the detectives were interested.

"Is this a Western Union station?" they asked.

"No," replied the agent.

"Ah, then you use the railroad wire to send a telegram like that?"

"Yes. We aren't supposed to do it, but we do sometimes. I know the operator at Calhoun, you know, and we make it up between us all right."

"Then," said Old King Brady, "there is no law to prevent your telling us what that telegram is."

"Of course not."

"Will you do so?"

The agent grinned again.

"You asylum keepers are pretty good fellows," he said.

"I don't care if I do a little to accommodate you. Just step inside and I'll show you the message."

It is hardly necessary to say that the Bradys accepted this offer.

They entered the station.

After much fumbling in his papers the agent produced a copy of the telegram.

Thus it read:

"To Martin Mack, Calhoun City—Am here O. K. Shall wait for the express, and hope to see you on board. Charlie started for Lakeport. Will go back to Buffalo by steamer. Meet me on express. Yours, MEG."

The detectives now understood all.

The crooks had adopted the plan of temporary separation, as this proved.

Meg had remained hidden near the Smallville station. Charlie Dunn had been on his way to, and probably was now in, Lakeport.

But Martin Mack had struck out in the other direction for Calhoun City. It was a strategic move.

But the telegram revealed that he was coming down on the express and Meg expected to join him here. They would probably return to New York.

Of course all was plain sailing for the detectives now.

All they had to do was to wait for the express and gather the birds in.

So they sat down in the station.

The express would be due in thirty minutes.

The station agent was loquacious.

"I reckon there must have been quite a liberating of lunatics at the asylum," he said. "Of course this fellow she telegraphs to is one?"

Old King Brady had not the heart to keep up the deception longer.

So he said:

"Look here, my friend. We are not keepers of a lunatic asylum."

The station agent looked blank.

"What's that?" he asked. "You aren't asylum keepers?"

"No."

"You ain't lunatics yourselves?" with some apprehension.

The Bradys roared.

"Well, hardly!" said Old King Brady.

"I hope not!" said Young King Brady. "No, my friend. Here is our credential."

He displayed his star.

The fellow gasped:

"Detectives!"

"Yes," replied Young King Brady. "We are detectives. Nothing more nor less."

The station agent's face broadened into an expansive smile.

"Well," he said, "it's all right. I knew you were asylum keepers or something of the kind."

At this the detectives laughed again. But the station agent was good-humored.

The detectives kept in the waiting room and on the lookout for Meg.

But for some reason or other she did not show up.

What did it mean?

Had she taken the alarm?

It was hard to imagine how this could be, and yet no other conclusion could be well assumed.

But now the distant whistle of the train was heard.

The detectives were on the platform as the express rolled up to the station. The engine was detached, and glided away to connect with the water tank.

Young King Brady went to the forward end of the train, while the old detective went to the rear.

It was the purpose of the old detective to pass through

the cars, and Young King Brady would watch outside and see that the bird did not make his escape.

The young detective stood on the car steps looking back. Suddenly there was a commotion in that very car.

A man dashed from his seat and toward the forward end of the car. But through the window he saw Young King Brady standing on the steps.

Martin Mack saw that he was hemmed in. Fearful desperation seized him.

He paused and looked about him like a hunted animal.

He knew one detective was in his rear and the other before him. On the impulse of the moment he tried a mad scheme.

With a powerful blow of his fist he broke the car window. Then he took a mighty chance. He made a plunge forward.

The crook made a bold attempt to force his way through the car window and escape.

But a man came rushing along the platform.

It was Old King Brady.

CHAPTER IX.

WORKING FOR CLEWS.

Martin Mack might as well have spared his pains, for escape was impossible.

The detectives had him cornered.

Young King Brady was already in the car and closing upon him from behind.

Old King Brady faced him and said sternly:

"You might as well yield, Mack. Your race is run."

To the crook this was plain.

When a man of his class gives in it is usually a complete surrender. The villain was abject.

He allowed the detective to pull him through the window and handcuff him.

Old King Brady had told the truth.

His race was run.

In vain the detectives waited for Meg.

She did not show up.

The express went on its way.

Fortunately, in the little village of Smallville there was a small "lockup" or prison house. In this, in charge of the local sheriff, the prisoner was placed.

Then the detectives renewed their quest for Slippery Meg.

But the woman had dropped out of sight most effectually. Not the slightest clew could be found anywhere. It was strange, indeed, what had become of her.

No other conclusion could be formed than that she had in some way got the alarm and fled.

For two days the detectives searched.

Then they went to Lakeport to look for Handsome Charlie. But all trace of him vanished in the direction of New York City.

The detectives learned that a woman had been seen with him.

This made all plain enough.

Doubtless it was Meg.

She had cleverly managed to join him, and they had returned to New York, forced to leave Mack to his fate.

There was nothing left for the detectives now but to return to Gotham.

But their quest had not been altogether barren of fruit. Already two of the Pullman car crooks were behind bars—Sly Jimmy and Martin Mack.

To be sure, the shrewdest members of the gang were yet at large.

But the detectives believed that it would be only a question of time ere they would also be run down.

There was no doubt but that the rest of the gang would lie low for a while. This would be a respite for the detectives.

Martin Mack was taken straight to the Tombs prison.

He was incarcerated in the same cell with Sly Jimmy, there to await trial.

The detectives then reported at headquarters.

The chief was delighted to see them.

"You have done bravely!" he cried. "Two of the crooks are in limbo and the others are placed all right."

But Old King Brady said:

"Chief, the case has only just begun. We shall have more trouble with Slippery Meg and her confrere than we have had with the rest of the gang."

"You think so?"

"I know it."

"Slippery Meg is a sharp woman."

"Yes; and a woman is the worst species of criminal a detective can encounter, especially if she is smart like Meg."

For a time the country heard nothing from the Pullman car crooks.

Nor from Old King Brady, either. Both detectives seemed to drop from sight.

Six weeks passed.

Summer had passed into autumn.

One October day a richly-dressed lady alighted from a brougham at the Pennsylvania depot in the city of Philadelphia.

She wore a profusion of diamonds, and her dress was of the most expensive silk. She was evidently one of the moneyed class.

She entered the station and went at once to the information bureau.

"Would you kindly tell me if the Washington express is late?" she asked of the clerk.

The latter glanced at a slate.

"Twenty-eight minutes," he said.

"Thank you!"

The lady made her way back to the carriage, and was driven away.

A tall, gray-bearded gentleman with eye glasses stood near and heard her words. He started at her voice, and scanned her closely.

"That is queer," he muttered. "I have heard that voice before somewhere."

He tried to think. Then he gave a violent start.

Excitement seemed to seize him.

He sprang to the door of the station.

But the carriage was gone.

Down the crowded thoroughfare it could be identified nowhere. The gray-bearded man with apparent disappointment returned to the waiting room.

As he did so he beckoned to a young man with pink cheeks and a shining silk hat who stood near the ticket office.

The young man came up quickly.

"Did you see that woman, Harry?"

"Yes," replied Young King Brady, for he it was. The old man, of course, was Old King Brady.

The two shrewd detectives had got a clew which led them over to the Quaker City.

But once there, they had completely lost it.

For days they had been groping in the dark.

But now it looked as if something out of the ordinary was coming their way. Old King Brady said:

"If I hadn't been a fool I believe we would have had the scent once more. Do you know, I believe that woman was Slippery Meg."

Young King Brady was surprised.

"Do you?"

"I recognized the voice. But before I could associate it with Meg she was gone."

"That is too bad. Perhaps she will come back."

"Then we had better wait here."

"Sure!"

An idea occurred to Old King Brady.

He proceeded to execute it.

He walked up to the clerk in the bureau of information.

He assumed a confidential air.

"Pleasant day!" he remarked.

"Very!" agreed the clerk.

"Yours is a busy life. You must see a good many faces in the course of time?"

"Yes; a good many."

"I suppose you remember some of them."

"If they impress me I do."

"Ah! Try a cigar?"

"Thank you. I will not smoke now."

"Try it later, then. By the way, that lady who was just here—lots of diamonds—swell piece, wasn't she?"

"Well, I should say so!" agreed the clerk.

"I've a curiosity to know who she is."

"Oh, her name is Mrs. Warren Delancey, I believe. She lives in a fine house on Broad street. Her husband is a swell mug. They swim high, I tell you."

"Um!" exclaimed the detective. "Is her husband a stout man, rather good-looking?"

"Yes; and you can see he's a high-roller. She asked for that Washington express. He goes down to the capital every week. Likely she means to meet him here and will be back again soon. You'll get another look at her."

"Ah, I see. I think I used to know her husband, War-

ren Delancey—that's the name. So they cut a figure in society here?"

"Yes."

"That's good."

"Sure! Money does it every time."

"You're right."

The detective strolled away.

He linked arms with Young King Brady.

They went out and paraded the platform. All the while they made deductions.

"So that's the game they are playing now," commented Young King Brady. "Retired on their ill-gotten gains and cutting a big figure in Philadelphia society."

"They have married, then?"

"That was their purpose."

"Love and rascality."

"Happy couple! But their money carries them along. A shrewd pair. The chances are, however, that they are still on the move."

"I dare say. Their opportunities now must be grand."

"Well rather! Handsome Charlie goes down to Washington once a week, eh? Of course he has some lead down there. Probably he is working some of the politicians. He has a good head, Dunn has."

"Now we're getting at it; keep on."

"We will assume that Slippery Meg has got a foothold in high circles here. She can keep her end up. Some of these rich people will miss things very soon."

Young King Brady opened a newspaper.

"Look here!" he said.

A long article occupied the page.

Simmered down it was as follows:

"A mysterious succession of strange thefts has created a sensation in high circles in our city. A number of our wealthiest ladies have lost money and jewels, sometimes taken mysteriously from their very boudoirs in broad daylight.

"Detectives have been employed, and every suspicious person watched. But no clew can be gained, and the robberies go on. Strange suspicions are hinted at, and there is a secret theory that Philadelphia society has at least a fashionable kleptomaniac. It is likely this person will yet be discovered, and the result will be she will be socially ostracized and the repetition of her offences guarded against in the future. The losses are more than annoying when they assume the proportion of Mrs. Schuyler Carter's. She lost a diamond brooch valued at sixty-five hundred dollars."

More followed.

But this was enough.

The detectives stared at each other.

"This beats Pullman car work," said Old King Brady. "We shall have to locate Mr. and Mrs. Warren Delancey."

"By Jove! We are in luck. We ought to have the gang in hand now with ease."

At this moment a train came booming into the depot.

Then a lady was seen to come rushing along the platform.

She was the richly-dressed lady, to all purposes, whom Old King Brady had seen at the bureau of information.

She was Mrs. Warren Delancey.

She met a stout, good-looking man who embraced her and then accompanied her to the brougham.

He entered it with her.

They drove away.

The detectives had been close behind them all the while.

"Well," said Young King Brady, "what do you think?"

"If that is Handsome Charlie he has grown old. But he is likely well made up."

"And the woman——"

"She don't look like Slippery Meg as we knew her. But, I say, both probably in adopting this new life have changed their personal appearance."

So the detectives concluded.

They did not follow the brougham.

There was no need of this.

Old King Brady consulted a directory.

He found that Mr. Warren Delancey lived in one of the most fashionable streets in Philadelphia. The detectives rolled up that way.

They passed the house and studied it from various quarters.

In a corner grocery Old King Brady found just the man he wanted.

The grocer was garrulous and sociable, and the detective soon had made of him an easy mark. He learned much that was of great value.

CHAPTER X.

MR. DELANCEY'S DOUBLE.

"I suppose some big swell lives in that house with the double bay windows?" asked the detective.

"Do ye mean forty-nine?" asked the grocer.

"Yes."

"Oh, that's Mr. Delancey. Him and his wife are the best people in this part of Philadelphia. Now, Mrs. Delancey she comes in here to trade, an' there's nothing too good fer her. Just take 'em to the cook, she says, an' send the bill to Mister Delancey. No questions asked."

"Even if the bill stretches," suggested Old King Brady, with a twinkle.

"Oh, sure, you know a poor grocer must make a living. Oh, there's heaps of money in that Delancey fambly. They'd never miss a grocer's bill."

"How long have they been residents about here?"

"Let me see," he said. "I've been here eighteen year, an' they was here afore I came."

Old King Brady was astounded.

"What?" he gasped.

"That's the truth."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Of course I am!"

"I was of the impression that they had lived here but a few years at best."

"It's full eighteen years."

The old detective was dumfounded. It was hard for him to comprehend that Slippery Meg and Handsome Charlie had been living such a double life as this for such a length of time.

However, the grocer was positive.

It was an astonishing thing despite this to both detectives. However, there were parallel cases in the annals of crime.

"They are deeper than I thought them," said Old King Brady.

Then the two detectives started to return to their hotel.

But suddenly, like a thunderbolt, a conviction dawned upon the old detective.

He stopped right still and began to dance up and down. Young King Brady looked at him in amazement.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Are you crazy?"

"No; but I'm a thick-headed fool that I didn't see it before," cried Old King Brady.

"See what?"

"The point!"

"What point?"

"Why, it's as plain as the nose on your face. You remember the woman who came to the bureau of information first and whose voice I heard?"

"Yes."

"She was Slippery Meg."

"Why, you said so before!"

"The clerk in the bureau said that she was Mrs. Warren Delancey. He was mistaken. She was not Mrs. Delancey. The real Mrs. Delancey came later to meet her husband."

Like a flash Young King Brady also saw the point.

And he also marveled that he had not seen it before.

For a moment the two detectives were silent.

Then Young King Brady said:

"The old game of make-up."

"Just so! Come with me."

"Where are you going?"

"To call on the Delanceys."

The detectives were soon at the entrance to the Delancey mansion.

They pulled the bell.

A servant took their cards.

In a few moments he returned and said:

"Mr. Delancey is out, but Mrs. Delancey will see you."

The two detectives were shown into an elegant reception room.

They had not long to wait.

The lady of the house presently appeared. As she came into the room a glance was all that was necessary to show that she was not identical with Meg Mullins.

But there were certain physical points she possessed in common with Meg, and which would have made it easy for the lady crook to imitate.

"Mrs. Delancey," said Old King Brady in a courteous tone.

Both detectives bowed.

She acknowledged the courtesy.

"You are detectives?" she asked.

"We are," replied Old King Brady.

"What is your business with me?"

"I wish to ask you a few questions."

"Proceed."

"Have you heard of the reports which seem to be current in Philadelphia society of certain mysterious thefts, at one time ascribed to some kleptomaniac?"

Mrs. Delancey's eyes dilated.

"I myself have been a victim," she said.

The detectives bowed.

"You have no suspicion of the identity of this person?" was asked.

Mrs. Delancey was thoughtful.

"No direct suspicion," she replied. "But I have at times been puzzled by some very strange and almost personal remarks about myself. Indeed, I am informed of at least one lady who almost accused me of the deeds of kleptomania. I wish to state that such suspicions are absolutely false."

The two detectives exchanged glances.

They smiled.

Mrs. Delancey's face flushed. She seemed about to speak again in a heated manner. But Old King Brady put up a deprecating hand.

"Do not excite yourself, madam," he said. "We know that the suspicions directed against you were false."

Mrs. Delancey bowed.

"I can assure you they are," she said with dignity. "There is not the slightest reason for them. Mrs. Drexel asserts that she missed a diamond locket after my call at her house. The truth is, I did not call at her house on the day she asserts."

"And you are right," said Old King Brady. "You did not call there that day. But, on the other hand, Mrs. Drexel may have been justified in her suspicion."

"What do you mean?"

Mrs. Delancey's face flushed.

"Perhaps I spoke bluntly," said Old King Brady suavely. "Pardon me! I will use plainer language. You did not call there. You are right. And yet Mrs. Drexel was justified."

"I don't understand you."

"She was justified under certain peculiar circumstances."

"What are the circumstances?"

"Mrs. Warren Delancey called there that day and left her card. Mrs. Drexel probably can tell you that."

"She did tell me that. But I did not call, just the same."

"Madam," said Old King Brady gravely, "did it ever occur to you that you might have a double?"

Mrs. Delancey half started from her chair. The effect produced upon her was very marked.

She stared at the detectives.

Her lips parted and she seemed extraordinarily excited. She seemed at a loss for words, but finally stammered:

"I—I have never thought of it before. But now that you speak of it I recall many curious happenings which such a thing might explain."

"Name at least one."

Mrs. Delancey was thoughtful.

Then she said:

"One very peculiar thing, which my husband positively asserts I am wrong in. In fact, he chose to deem me afflicted with a total lapse of memory, and insisted that I consult a specialist on such diseases as mental aberration. That is, of the transient sort."

"Pray name it."

"He insists that I called at the office and demanded of the cashier five thousand dollars. It was in his absence the cashier paid the money, as the other clerks all swore to me. I was not at the office that day, and knew nothing of it."

"Could you not prove the alibi?"

"Unfortunately not. My maid was away, and I went for a walk that day. I met no person who could substantiate my story."

"And your husband deemed you afflicted with memory trouble, or lapse of memory?"

"Yes. The queerest thing is, no trace of the five thousand dollars has ever been found."

Old King Brady smiled.

"Well, madam," he said, "the next time your husband accuses you of such a thing kindly inform him that you are innocent and can prove it my me—James Brady."

"By you?"

"Yes."

"You detectives are wonderfully acute."

"One need not be very acute to see through this mystery. It is the easiest thing in the world. You have a doubt. She has been making calls and borrowing money in your personality."

"You know this?"

"Yes."

"Who is she?"

"You shall know that when we place her behind the bars," said the detective. "Her name, as she is known in criminal circles, is Slippery Meg."

"A euphonious appellation."

"Somewhat! But she is far from euphonious herself. She is a very bad and dangerous woman."

"But I cannot conceive how people can be deceived by her. Does she look like me?"

The detectives smiled.

This was a woman's question.

"Not remarkably," replied Old King Brady. "But you know an adept with features as regular as yours can make up very easily to resemble any other person with regular features."

Then Old King Brady told of the visit of Meg to the depot just previous to Mr. Delancey's coming to meet his husband.

"I did not call at the information bureau," she said. "I went to the station only once."

"I thought so," said Old King Brady quietly.

Mrs. Delancey was very much interested. The conversation was resumed to some extent further; then she asked:

"But what do you want us to do, Mr. Brady, to help catch these dangerous people?"

"I have a plan," said the old detective. "Send our report that you have been called away suddenly to S"

Francisco. Then remain quietly at home. Let nobody see you for several days. Are you willing to do this?"

"Certainly!"

At this moment Mr. Delancey came in.

He was astounded at the story told him by his wife and the detectives.

He listened to it all with interest.

Then he said:

"I trust you will bag that woman at all hazards. The best people of Philadelphia will stand behind you, Mr. Brady."

"It is only my desire to subserve the ends of justice," replied the old detective. "It has been thwarted long enough by these crooks."

"We will follow your instructions," said Mr. Delancey. "I will arrange things to-morrow and send the report out that we were suddenly called away across the continent and left on a midnight train."

"Very good," said Old King Brady. "I think I can guarantee that Philadelphia society will be troubled no more by the kleptomaniac."

This caused all to laugh. The detectives now withdrew, and soon were again in the street.

But as they emerged from the porch and started down the street Young King Brady clutched the old detective's arm.

A man stood on the curb stone at a distant corner. He gave a glance at the detectives, then hastily entered a cab and drove away. Even at that distance they knew him.

It was Handsome Charlie.

"We have been watched," said Old King Brady.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ENGLISHMAN AND HIS MONEY.

It was a startling revelation to the detectives that they had been seen to enter the Delancey house by one of the Pullman car gang.

Of course the crook, Handsome Charlie, understood at once what their errand there must have been.

The detectives were dismayed.

"Confound it!" ejaculated Old King Brady. "That will put Meg on her guard. They have us on the hip everywhere."

"It is a hard fight."

"Indeed it is."

They did not attempt pursuit.

Indeed, it would have been futile.

Nor did it change their plans.

The detectives were decided to go ahead just as planned.

The scheme to have Mr. and Mrs. Delancey remain closely at home while the report was abroad that they were en route to San Francisco would have a several-sided effect upon the case.

Of course it would put an end to Meg's masquerading in Philadelphia.

But the detectives had no thought that she would abandon so rich a field.

It would be a very simple and easy matter to transfer it to the railroad. Of course Meg would take to traveling.

And thus the detectives believed they could terminate her Philadelphia career and once more catch her red-handed in her evil work.

The next day Mr. Delancey told every friend that he met that he should leave for San Francisco within the week.

The society column of the papers made an item of it.

At such hurried notice of course no P. P. C. calls were in order. It was understood that necessity in the shape of a dying relative was the cause. At such times society eschews calls.

So one day the Delancey house presented a deserted aspect.

The curtains were closed, and the owners had apparently departed.

The Two Bradys had also played a great bluff hand. But an amusing discovery was made previous to this.

It nearly convulsed Young King Brady.

They were shadowed.

It seemed odd, indeed, for detectives—natural shadows themselves—to be shadowed.

It did not take them long to locate the identity of the shadower.

It was no other than Handsome Charlie.

The detectives, however, shook him easily when they got ready.

But in doing this they also worked a little game of blind. They left their hotel and bought tickets openly to New York.

Handsome Charlie followed them to the train. He saw them off.

What his conclusions were the detectives could only guess.

But they did not hit New York that trip.

At the first station they alighted.

Then they donned clever disguises and took a return train to Philadelphia. They went to another hotel, and then haunted the depot.

And the very night that Mr. and Mrs. Delancey were supposed to leave for San Francisco they saw Meg and Handsome Charlie enter the depot.

They might have bagged them then and there, but suddenly they disappeared.

Not a trace of them could be found.

While they were searching the depot the train pulled out. Again the detectives were left. It was a sore defeat.

For Old King Brady had no doubt but that the two crooks had really departed on that train.

He could not telegraph ahead to have them arrested, for no other officers could identify them. There was only one thing to do.

Take the next express.

This they did.

They tracked their birds as far as Buffalo. Here they again lost track of them. Then Old King Brady reached a sage conclusion.

"We shall hear from them next in Chicago," he declared.

And he was right.

A Buffalo society item in the newspapers announced:

"Mr. and Mrs. Warren Delancey, of Philadelphia, honored Buffalo with a short stop on their way to San Francisco."

"Ah!" said Old King Brady. "There you are. I'll warrant you'll find that Meg left a remembrance behind her in Buffalo."

"If she was able to hit anybody for a few hundred," said Young King Brady.

The detectives called at the hotel where the two crooks had stopped.

But they were no longer there.

They were informed that Mr. and Mrs. Delancey had left for Chicago.

"Well, what now?" asked Young King Brady.

"That's easy! We must follow them."

He consulted a time table.

The next train for Chicago left in thirty minutes. It was a night train.

The detectives bought tickets and got into the Pullman car.

The train pulled out of Buffalo, and they were soon on their way to Chicago. The Bradys took no special notice of the other occupants of the car.

Young King Brady afterward recalled the fact that two ladies occupied seats just across the aisle.

One was very stout and masculine and wore widow's weeds.

The other was apparently younger, and wore a veil constantly. They were very quiet passengers.

A little further along in the car sat a quiet old gentleman with gold-bowed glasses.

He had the appearance of a man of wealth, for he was attended by a valet. He carried a brown leather bag.

For miles the train boomed on, and nobody seemed to think of retiring.

But suddenly the old gentleman with the valet turned and scrutinized the detectives.

Then he turned to his valet and spoke a few words.

The fellow came up to the Bradys and said respectfully:

"My master, Sir William Van Horne, presents his compliments. You are strangers, but he would ask if you would care to become partners at whist in the smoking room?"

Old King Brady gave the younger detective a quick glance. Then he replied:

"Give Sir William our best respects. We are James and Harry Brady, of New York. We will be glad to join him."

The valet made the fourth member of the party.

All then adjourned to the smoking compartment. Sir William carried the brown leather bag and placed it between his knees.

The Bradys found him an adept whist player, a keen raconteur and a convivial spirit generally.

His flashes of wit were bright and genuine. In the course of the game he became communicative.

"I am new in this country," he said, "but I have a nephew in business in Chicago. I am backing him, and we propose

to enlarge our business interests. I brought him five thousand pounds in Bank of England notes to New York. There exchanged them for American gold, twenty-five thousand dollars. I have it here in this bag, which is where I keep it by my side all the time."

The two detectives were amazed.

They looked at Sir William wonderingly.

"Pardon me!" said Old King Brady. "But do you know you are taking big chances?"

"Eh? You say so?" asked the Englishman.

"There are safer ways of transmitting that money to Chicago. For instance, telegraph order, or express or bank draft."

Sir William smiled blandly.

"Yes; of course," he said. "But I am unfamiliar with your American systems, so I reckoned the money would be safer right with me. Do you think there is any chance of being robbed?"

"Well," exclaimed Old King Brady, "it will all depend on whether you give the party a chance or not."

Sir William looked uneasy.

"Now I call to mind the fact, I was told that a number of crooks were robbing Pullman car passengers all over the country. Do you think any of the gang are aboard the train?"

"I hardly think so," replied Old King Brady. "Yet I would do no harm to use extreme caution. I have a suggestion to make."

"Well?"

"Transfer this money to the pockets of your coat and hide the coat under the mattress of your berth, or at least under your pillow. Put worthless paper in the bag."

Van Horne looked puzzled.

"Why do that?" he asked.

"For safety."

"I cannot see wherein it would be safer. Can you show me?"

"Well," said the old detective carelessly, "suit yourself. But the point is this: If any gang of thieves are onto you and are following you they know that you carry the gold in that leather bag. That will be the object of their effort. Let them have it."

"I see!"

"We are detectives. We will keep an eye out and perhaps can establish the identity of the rascals."

"Capital!" cried Sir William excitedly. "Nothing could be better. I will follow your instructions. Ah, gentlemen, I am glad to have met you! Shall we resume our cards?"

The game went on.

The valet, James, was Young King Brady's partner. The score alternated with little advantage either way.

For an hour they played. Then the party broke up, Sir William expressing his thanks to the detectives for their company.

Then with his valet he went back to his seat. It was now about time to retire.

The Bradys, however, were on the alert.

They exchanged glances.

Then by means of their deaf and dumb alphabet they conversed.

"What do you think of it?" asked Young King Brady. "Is there any possibility of the Pullman car gang being onto this man?"

Old King Brady looked puzzled.

Then he answered:

"I don't see how it can be either Meg or Dunn. We know they have gone on to Chicago."

"We were informed of that. But we did not see them leave."

"Very true!"

"There is a possibility that they are on this train in disguise. They fooled us once."

"We will take a look around us."

"I think it well to do so."

So the detectives went back to their seats. Not wearing disguises, of course they were an easy mark for the crooks, presuming that they were on the train.

In a careful manner the detectives proceeded to take a look about the car. They scrutinized each passenger.

But this resulted in nothing of value, so far as gaining a clew went.

But Old King Brady was attracted by the woman in widow's weeds and her companion with the veil.

He studied them closely.

However, he could see nothing about them which gave him any kind of a clew. If they were disguised it was so cleverly done that detection was impossible.

But the old detective was not satisfied.

Again he telegraphed to Young King Brady:

"Do you see anything remarkable about the women in back?"

Young King Brady did not answer for a moment or so. When he did, his reply gave the old detective a keen surprise.

"Yes," was the reply. "One of them wears false hair."

CHAPTER XII.

ONCE MORE OUTWITTED.

In spite of the gravity of the situation Old King Brady laughed outright.

The humor of the reply was too evident.

Young King Brady looked surprised.

"What's the matter?" he asked with his finger alphabet.

"Matter?" replied Old King Brady. "The criminal aspect you so seriously put upon the fact that a woman wears false hair."

Young King Brady grinned.

"Well, that is what it is," he replied.

"There are few women who do not wear false hair."

"Perhaps I ought to have said a wig."

"Well, it's all right, my boy. It's a clew, however slight. Perhaps it is worn as a disguise."

"I believe it is."

"You do?"

"Yes."

"Humph! That alters the case. We had better investigate."

Old King Brady took up a position in his seat from which he could easily study the woman without the fact being noticed by her.

It was not long before he felt bound to share Young King Brady's opinion.

The woman wore a wig.

It might be that this was necessary to conceal baldness. But it was easier to assume that it was a disguise.

In vain Old King Brady tried to get a good line on the woman's profile.

He could not associate her figure, or her features either, with those of Slippery Meg. He was baffled.

Meanwhile the occupants of the car had begun to retire.

The porters were busy making up the berths. It did not take Old King Brady long, however, to decide upon a plan.

"Harry," he said in an undertone, "I believe those women are part of the gang, even if not identical with Meg and Handsome Charlie."

Young King Brady nodded.

"So do I," he agreed.

"I have a plan."

"What is it?"

"It looks to me that if they are really part of the gang that the wealthy Englishman is their intended victim."

"Of course!"

"Now, if that is the case, it will be easy to trap them."

"How do you propose to do it?"

Old King Brady elaborated his plan.

"It is easy enough," he said. "I will exchange berths with Sir William."

"Capital!"

"But it must not be seen by them."

"Of course not. Will the Englishman be willing?"

"He ought to. I will see him."

Old King Brady went to Sir William's seat and sat down beside him.

In a very few moments he had explained to him the whole plan.

Sir William at once fell in with it.

"If there are any of the crooks aboard this car," he said, "I shall be glad to see you nip them."

"Then you will exchange berths with me?"

"Certainly! That will make my money all the safer, will it not? I will leave it under the mattress, as you suggested."

"A good plan. Now watch your chance. We shall have to change berths at an unseen moment."

"All right!"

By this time nearly everybody in the car had retired.

Old King Brady and Sir William exchanged berths in a skilful manner. They believed that it was unobserved.

The old detective did not undress.

He reclined in the berth with his right hand gripping a revolver, and waited for the robbers to come.

Young King Brady was in the berth over him, for Sir William had made his valet exchange also with the young detective.

The Bradys felt sure that their game would work.

What a genuine surprise party it would be to the crooks to find the detectives in the berths instead of the birds they expected to fleece!

The train dashed on.

After a time it slackened speed.

It was now nearly two o'clock.

In another moment the train came to a standstill. Voices were heard outside the car.

Then the door of the Pullman car opened and a draught of air came through. At that moment a peculiar odor came to the detectives' nostrils.

It was the odor of ether.

The old detective experienced a sudden shock. Very carefully he parted the curtains and looked through the car.

The conductor was angrily interrogating the porter.

"Did you pull the bell rope?"

"No, sah!"

"Do you know that anybody in this car did?"

"No, sah! Not a soul, sah!"

In an instant the old detective was out of his berth.

Young King Brady followed him.

The smell of the drug was very plain.

"Go forward, Harry," said Old King Brady sternly. "I'm afraid we've been fooled."

"They've slipped us again!" declared the young detective with conviction.

But he went to the other end of the car and stood there with drawn revolvers.

The conductor approached him.

"Look here!" he cried. "Do you know anything about this? Did you signal this train to stop?"

"No, sir!" replied Young King Brady.

"Who are you?"

"We are detectives."

"Detectives?"

"Yes. If anybody signaled for the train to stop, from this car, it was probably the Pullman car crooks. We believe they are aboard, and we mean to bag them if we can."

The conductor was astounded.

"You don't mean it!" he cried. "Well, we'll help you. Here, George!" to the porter. "Go forward and spread the report. Send all the train men down here to surround this car."

"That is right!" cried Young King Brady. "By doing that we may get them."

Old King Brady had gone to Sir William's berth.

As he parted the curtains he expected to find the Englishman a helpless victim of the drug.

His surprise was great to find that this was not the case.

The berth was empty.

Sir William was not there.

His valet's berth was empty also.

They were both gone.

The car window was wide open. The detective was aghast.

What did it mean?

Had they been murdered and their bodies flung out of the window by the crooks? But this did not seem logical.

By this time the other passengers in the car were aroused. Some got up and others contented themselves with leaning out of their berths. But there were two berths where the curtains hung motionless.

Were the occupants yet asleep?

One of these sections Old King Brady knew was occupied by the suspicious women.

The old detective made prompt action.

He rapped on the berth.

There was no answer.

Then he called loudly.

No answer.

"Humph!" he said, and pulled the curtains.

The section was empty.

The window was open, just as it was in Sir William's berth. The two women occupants were gone.

The detective now made no hesitation in examining the next section.

He remembered that this had been occupied by a plain-looking, middle-aged man.

The berth was occupied.

The middle-aged man lay quite still and pale with his head tipped back and a handkerchief across his mouth and nostrils.

The smell of ether was quite plain.

He was the victim.

The old detective needed no further search to understand how he and Young King Brady had been duped.

It was a clever game.

Sir William was a bogus nobleman.

He and his valet were members of a gang whom the detectives had not yet met. Pinned to the curtain of his berth was a piece of paper.

On it was written:

"To the Bradys—Smart detectives, we give you our compliments. We can always do better work when you are on hand. You can play cards, but you can't catch your men truly,
THE PULLMAN CAR CROOKS."

The Bradys were defeated again.

The drugged victim of the crooks was in due time restored.

He gave his name as Lawrence Kirk, of Michigan, and he had six thousand dollars on his person when he boarded the train.

It was gone.

He was only one more victim of the Pullman car crooks.

And this most daring of all the famous robberies had been accomplished right under the noses of the two most noted detectives in America.

It was easy to see how the detectives had been fooled.

While the Bradys, under the assumption that the bogus Sir William was the objective victim of the crooks, had been waiting for the thieves to run their necks into the noose prepared for them they had succeeded in robbing Kirk and making their escape through the car windows after stopping the train.

There was no doubt but that the two veiled ladies in black were Handsome Charlie and Slippery Meg.

Sir William was no other, as Old King Brady guessed, than Joe Bentley, a famous Denver crook.

James, the valet, was an unknown quantity and probably a new accomplice.

There was good reason for the disappointment experienced by the Bradys.

Once more they had been circumvented by Slippery Meg and her gang.

The detectives, however, did not fail to leave the train to enter upon the pursuit in the dark, which would likely prove a thrilling one.

They took leave of the train men and passengers, and the train went thundering on without them.

The Bradys were resolute now.

They were determined to follow the crooks like sleuth hounds.

No chance would be ignored that could possibly afford an opportunity to round up this dangerous gang.

Old King Brady was on his mettle.

The old detective did not like the idea of such a defeat. He was bound to play a winning hand for once.

Thus far it had been a hard fight.

The crooks had in every case had the best of the argument.

Left in the darkness beside the railroad track, just as they had once before found themselves, the Bradys hastily formed their plans.

It was a pitchy dark night.

Not knowing anything of the country about, it was assumed that the crooks would keep to the railroad track.

"That hasn't what they will do," declared Young King Brady. "Let which way will they go?"

"Back toward Buffalo."

"I believe you."

CHAPTER XIII.

A HARD CHASE.

It was more than likely that this would really be the course pursued by the crooks.

New York City was their headquarters, and now that the Chicago game of traveling in the guise of Mr. and Mrs. Warren Delancey had failed they would be likely to go back to their resorts in Gotham.

This was Old King Brady's theory.

And it proved a correct one.

Down the tracks toward Buffalo the detectives swiftly sped.

They ran rapidly.

At times they would fling themselves down upon the sands and apply their ears to the iron rails.

Everybody knows that these rails are great conductors of sound. The approach of a train can be heard many miles away.

And so the detectives heard the distant murmur of voices and the tramp of feet.

Somebody, quite a distance ahead, was walking rapidly along the track. There were several people.

This Old King Brady felt sure of.

That they were the crooks seemed certain.

The detectives pressed on as silently as they could.

It soon became plain that they were gaining. The voices now were quite audible.

The Bradys were surprised.

They could hardly believe their senses.

Were these Pullman car crooks traveling in this noisy fashion? It was evident they did not fear pursuit.

As the detectives crept nearer the voices of the gang were distinguishable.

It was easy to identify Slippery Meg's screechy voice. It was raised in shrill treble.

"Ha-ha-ha!" she laughed shrilly. "It was worth a cool thousand to see you play the English lord, Joe! How you did fool those two gulls! Dead easy!"

"Ha-ha-ha!"

"Dead easy!"

The crooks all laughed.

The Bradys also laughed silently.

Those who laugh last always laugh best. The detectives' time had not yet come. But it would.

"I've heard a good deal about the Bradys," Bentley said, "but I don't think they are up to it as detectives. Why, they are easy."

"You fooled 'em, all right."

"As slick as could be. But they didn't even know you and Charlie."

"Don't make no mistake," said Handsome Charlie. "The Bradys ain't always to be caught napping that way. Keep your eyes right on 'em."

"You think so?"

"I know it. Just when you think they're easy they're only drawing the lines around you to fetch you up like a mustang under a lariat. I know 'em."

"Well, Charlie's right," declared Meg. "They are a long-headed pair. But we fooled 'em all right this time."

"I say," cried Bentley, "how far have we got to walk on this condemned track?"

"Nobody knows!"

"I don't like it."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Can't we find a hand car somewhere?"

"Perhaps so."

"But I say, Meg," cried Bentley, "what will you do about Mrs. Warren Delancey now? That game is up."

"Yes."

"And that suite you ordered by wire at the Palmer House——"

"It will keep," cried the female crook with an eerie laugh. "But I say! Didn't I leave a good memento with the hotel keeper in Buffalo. Only a five-thousand-dollar check signed by Mrs. Warren Delancey, of New York and Philadelphia."

"The treasurer of this company must have some money by this time," cried Bentley. "When are we going to Australia, Meg?"

"When the boodle reaches a million," replied Slippery Meg.

"There'll be only four of us to enjoy it. Poor Jimmy and Martin are in the Tombs. They'll not be out of Sing Sing for ten years anyway."

"We can't wait."

"Of course not."

At this moment the crook who had played valet to the bogus Sir William, and whose name was James Hart, cried:

"Hold on, mates! Here's a lift for us."

"What is it?" cried Bentley.

"The section gang's tool house, and probably we'll find a hand car here."

"Good! Is it locked?"

"Yes."

"Let me see it. I can pick any lock ever made."

There was a fumbling in the dark, smothered exclamations and a curse. Then the clank of iron was heard.

The detectives came to a halt, and Old King Brady whispered:

"If it wasn't so dark I believe we could bag the whole gang now."

"The darkness blocks us."

"Yes."

"They would make a fight."

"That is to be expected."

"What if they get the hand car out?"

Old King Brady was undecided what to do. It looked serious. The crooks would speedily distance them on the hand car.

The old detective was in a quandary.

He hardly knew what to do.

Meanwhile Bentley had opened the tool house door.

Matches were struck and a lantern found. This was lit.

The hand car was seen on the wooden track down which it was usually run to place it on the main track.

There were upon it the usual tools, sledges, crow bars and iron implements used by the railroad men.

These were hastily thrown out.

Then Bentley cried:

"Give me a lift, Hart and Dunn. We'll put her out quick."

"All right!"

The three crooks seized hold of the light car. They lifted it down the wooden track and placed it on the iron rails.

But just at that moment a stern voice came out of the darkness:

"Hands up, or you're all dead men!"

To say that the crooks were startled would be a very mild statement.

Like a flash they wheeled, to see two dark forms dimly outlined in the rays of the lantern.

"The man who moves hand or foot is a dead man!"

The crooks stood like statues.

They glared at the two dark figures and into the muzzles of the revolvers. It was a tableau.

It was a full half minute before further action was made.

Then Old King Brady said:

"The game is up, my friends. You will kindly put on these handcuffs."

The handcuffs rattled in the old detective's hand.

But in that very moment the crisis was precipitated. Joe Bentley was a fellow of very daring temperament.

He was not the one to easily submit to capture, for the fact that escape ensured a risk of life.

A desperado of the first class he was.

So he was the one responsible for what followed. He quivered for a moment beneath the muzzle of the revolver.

Then he gave vent to a low, deep curse.

Quick as a flash he kicked the lantern clear over the railroad embankment and turned a half somersault, yelling:

"Close on 'em, mates! There's only two of them. Down 'em!"

Crack! crack!

The revolvers spoke.

The Bradys were compelled to fire.

It meant death to them both if the gang closed in on them. In the darkness what followed was vague and hard to follow.

Old King Brady dashed forward after he fired.

He dared not fire again, nor did Young King Brady, for it could not be told who would get the bullet in the darkness—whether friend or foe.

That one at least of the shots had taken effect could be told by the loud yell of anguish which followed.

Then blows and yells and curses followed, together with a woman's shrill scream. Far up the track lights were seen and the tramp of feet resounded.

It was evident that the noise had alarmed a section hands themselves, who had been in the vicinity, and they were coming up to ascertain what the trouble was.

The Bradys, however, were too much occupied to notice this.

They were in a fearful struggle with the three crooks. Young King Brady received a stunning blow on the skull which for a moment weakened him so that he could not rise.

Old King Brady had floored one of the crooks. He had barely succeeded in slipping handcuffs on him when the hand car was heard to start away down the track.

Clankety-clank-clankety-clank!

The old detective knew that the game was escaping him.

He left the man whom he was holding and made a spasmodic effort to reach the car.

But he was too late.

It receded in the gloom, driven by the powerful arms of the two crooks, Dunn and Bentley, who shouted back mockingly:

"So long, old mossback! You're a fine detective, you are! Shake some of the moss off your back before you try to do us up!"

And Slippery Meg's screechy voice rose high in scornful laughter.

Old King Brady drew his revolver and fired. But it was without effect.

The darkness was too great for a good aim, and the car quickly ran out of range.

Young King Brady had now recovered himself. But too late. Yellow Hart lay helpless where Old King Brady had been. Now lanterns flashed and dark forms appeared on all the railroad men came upon the scene with much excitement and surprise. They surrounded the detectives, showing them up in the moonlight. Their exclamations were loud and deep. "What's this?" asked a spokesman. "What is going on?" "Wish you had got here a few moments earlier," said Old King Brady. "I should like to have had your help." "Who are you?" The detective flashed his star upon them. "We are the Bradys, detectives," he said. "We are chasing the Pullman car crooks. They have just given us the hand car. They have gone off with your hand car." "What a surprise went up. There is one of the gang!" cried Young King Brady, pointing at Hart. "Gone off with a hand car!" cried the spokesman of the Pullman gang. "Well, I like that! What do ye say, boys?" "Let's go after 'em!" "Hurry 'em!" "No!" cried Old King Brady. "The law will deal with them. But they seem to have the best of us. They got the hand car." The big boss of the railroad gang held up his lantern. "There's another hand car here," he said. "We've men pulling them down in ten miles. Here, Donnelly; Stevens get out the sulky hand car. We'll catch 'em!"

CHAPTER XIV.

AT THE FREIGHT YARDS.

"It's the lightest and fastest hand car on the Lake Shore," exclaimed Carter, the boss of the section, to Old King Brady. "It's a new patent sulky car, and it can go fast." "Good!" cried Old King Brady. "How many men can it carry?" "Six." "Then we can go along?" "Sure! You detectives sit in the tool box and hang your legs over. Donnelly and Stevens and Smith and I take turns at driving the car. Eh, boys?" A cheer went up. "Less time than it takes to tell it the light car was lifted onto the track. The detectives sat down in the car as directed by Carter, the boss. Directions were left for the men to hold Hart a prisoner until the detectives should return. Then the sulky car sped away. The chase had begun.

Of course time had elapsed. The crooks had a big start. But the grade was steadily up for four miles. Neither Dunn nor Bentley were used to running a hand car. The exertion would be sure to tell on them. Carter knew this. After the four-mile grade then it was down grade for the next five. The railroad boss reckoned on drawing up on the crooks within the four miles and then outspeeding them on the down grade. Away flashed the sulky car with great speed beneath the Herculean muscles of the powerful section men. Faster and faster it flew. Clickety-click! Clankety-clank! Around curves, across trestles and along embankments in the darkness it ran. And all the while Boss Carter's ears were strained to listen for the sound of the car ahead. For there was no light on it to serve as a guide. The detectives hung on and waited. Suddenly a great light showed up far away down the track. A distant booming whistle was heard. "The Chicago express!" cried Carter. "She's comin' fast!" "The express?" cried Old King Brady. "Yes. She runs a sixty-mile clip along here." "But—we have little time to get off the track," cried the alarmed detective. Boss Carter only laughed. "Don't ye fear! She's not on this track." "Are you sure of that?" "Dead sure!" Still as the great monster locomotive came rushing down through the inky gloom it seemed to the detectives as if she was certainly on the same track. But while she was yet two miles away, her headlight showing a pathway of light across the double tracks, a sight was seen which was comprehensive to the section men. They alone saw it. It was visible only for the briefest second of time. Beside the track was a hand car and a group of forms. To the section men they were the objects of pursuit. They had feared that the approaching train was on the same track, and had lifted the hand car off for safety while the train went past. "There they are!" cried Carter. "That delays them. Now we'll catch them. They haven't topped the four-mile grade yet. Bend to it, boys! Run 'em down!" The men at the crank bent lower to their work. The hand car literally flew. Straight toward the approaching leviathan of destruction. Had it been on the same track nothing short of a miracle could have saved those on the hand car. But it was not. The train flew past on the other track like a wild, maddened thing, and went roaring and booming away into the black arches of the night. The detectives drew a breath of relief.

In that moment their respect for the railroad men was greatly enhanced.

Their lives had been virtually in their hands. It was impossible to tell with the eye which track the train was on until it would have been too late.

But the section men knew that westbound trains never came up on any other track.

Still there was a chance.

Sometimes between certain stations for certain reasons—a broken rail or a washout—trains are run on the opposite track both ways. But very seldom.

On went the pursuers.

Presently Boss Carter said:

"I can hear them!"

Faster and faster went the sulky car. The four-mile grade was topped. It was all down grade now.

Suddenly the men on the sulky car began to slacken speed.

"She's just ahead!" declared Carter. "They must be done out. She's going slow!"

"Surrender, you dogs!" then roared the section boss. "Thar's no use; you can't get away. The country's wild here, and ye can't make it. Surrender or we'll fire on ye!"

No answer came back.

But the car ahead went on with regular rhythm. Suddenly Carter said:

"That's queer! Put on steam, boys, and catch that car. We mustn't leave her on the track."

"What is the matter?" asked Old King Brady, with sudden premonition.

"She's running wild."

"Running wild?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean? Have the crooks left her?"

"That's it."

It was plain now that the shrewd rascals had perpetrated another sly game.

They had left the car and let it run on alone to mislead the pursuers and give them time to escape in another direction.

Just how far back they had left the car could only be guessed.

But Carter said with conviction:

"It ain't far back. The four-mile grade ends only a mile away."

What was to be done?

Of course the first thing was to catch the runaway hand car and remove it from the track for the safety of passing trains.

Then search must be instituted for the crooks.

Under the handicap of darkness this would be difficult enough. But Carter said:

"Don't ye worry, lads! I know every foot of this region. They can't go far, and daylight will soon be here."

The hand car was caught.

But just then it ran around a curve and over some switches.

The signal lights of a small station were seen. On the siding was a waiting freight train.

It was waiting orders to move, and was doubtless held to allow some express to pass.

Some of the cars were being shunted onto side-track unloading. There were many strings of vacant or empty cars.

All this could be seen in the dim lights of the railroad yard. The section men removed the hand car from the track.

Then Carter said:

"Gentlemen, we can't do any more for ye until dawn comes. Then we'll take ye up the line ag'in and do best we kin to find them rascals."

"Surely we can ask no more," replied Old King Brady. "In the meanwhile we must wait."

"We might go over to the switchman's shanty. We haven't over an hour to wait, anyway. It's now o'clock."

"All right!"

So this was done.

They went over to the small shanty used by the switchman.

Here pipes were produced and the railroad men smoked and chatted. The detectives fell to making notes and deductions.

Time passed slowly.

Old King Brady's idea was that the crooks would make a detour through the country and try to make their way into the Dominion of Canada.

They would there be safe.

But Young King Brady had another theory.

"I doubt that," he said. "I believe they will go back to their tracks again toward Buffalo. They will think that we are off the track and will not suspect them as still sticking to the railroad."

There was certainly logic in this.

And yet Old King Brady's theory was just as reasonable. So he said:

"If we do not decide in the morning exactly what course they have taken we will separate. You can go back toward Buffalo and I will take the Canada route."

"Good!" agreed Young King Brady. "That will be first class."

And so it was settled.

But the detectives had hardly reached this conclusion when a startling surprise was accorded all.

Donnelly, one of the section men, had gone across the yard to the station.

He now came running in excitedly.

"Hello, mates!" he cried. "The agent at the station has seen two men and a woman skulkin' behind the freight cars over on the other side of the yard."

"Them's the people we want!" cried Boss Carter, excitedly. "They've walked right into our little trap. Get out, men. Surround the yard. Don't let 'em slip us."

The railroad men and the detectives slipped out of the shanty.

The gray light of dawn was just appearing in the east.

They separated and ran in opposite directions through the yard, back of the cars and the sheds.

But no sign of the crooks was to be seen anywhere.

Could the station agent be mistaken?

Boss Carter did not think so.

"This is a small town," he declared, "an' the people are quiet and straight folks. There ain't much chance that could be any other two men and a woman out at this hour of the morning.

"Then the station agent described 'em to a dot. They're din' round here somewhere."

So the quest was kept up.

But not a trace of the crooks could be found. It certainly was a mystery.

It looked as if the detectives were beaten again in their first fight. But yet they were not discouraged.

Soon the day broke clear and fair. The sky was cloudless.

People began to appear on their way to their morning work. The round-house was opened and local trains began to run through the town.

The freight-shifting engine appeared and began work on the sidings. Boss Carter now declared:

"Well, we've done all we could to help ye gents. They've given us the slip for sure. Now I s'pose we've got to get back onto the section to work."

"All right," said Old King Brady. "We must not hold you. We're greatly obliged for what you have done."

"You'll have to come back up the line to git your man," said Carter. "I'll leave the light hand car here for you. Keep your eye out for trains on the way up. Now, good-

CHAPTER XV.

ENTRAPPED AT LAST.

The detectives bade good-by to the railroad men with a wave of the hand.

They got upon their hand car and sped away up the track again. The Bradys now set to work seriously to solve the mystery.

That Slippery Meg and her two pals had been seen in the freight yard there was no manner of doubt.

That they had gone far from there the detectives did not believe.

So they devoted their best efforts to drawing the birds into cover, if possible. It was sharp work.

And while searching the yard and its corners Young King Brady came upon some foot-prints in the soft soil.

Two of them were the heavy boots of men, but the third was the slender foot of a woman.

The soil here was of a soft, clayey nature, and it was not hard to follow the trail. It led to a surprising conclusion.

The foot-prints crossed several tracks and then ceased.

Just where they terminated a line of freight cars had stood an hour previous. But they had been shifted and the tracks made up into a train.

Old King Brady carefully examined the termination of the trail.

He read the truth as plainly as the North American Indian reads the forest trail which he has followed for weary miles.

It could mean but one thing.

The crooks had here come to a stop.

They had not left the spot in any direction by walking. A freight car had stood here. What more natural than that they should enter it?

Concealed in the car, they had heard their pursuers all about them, and yet had felt safe.

Doubtless ere this the car and its occupants were far on their way to some distant point.

The detectives exchanged glances after this discovery.

"Well," said Old King Brady, "they have slipped us again."

"So it seems."

"Either we are growing dull or these are the sharpest chaps we have encountered for years," declared Old King Brady. "At any rate, I can't see that we have gained a point on them yet."

"I can," said Young King Brady.

"What?"

"I remember these cars well. They have not left the yard yet."

The old detective was astonished.

"Are you sure of that?" he asked.

The young detective nodded.

"I am," he replied.

"Do you know the cars when you see them?"

"I think I do. If I am not mistaken they were New York Central cars. Ah, there is one of them now."

The shifting engine was backing a car across the yard and helping make up an outgoing freight.

The two detectives approached this car.

As they did so Old King Brady saw that the door was slightly ajar. And in that narrow crack he fancied for an instant that he saw a white face.

Only for an instant was it visible.

He drew his revolver.

"Come on, Harry," he cried. "I believe we've got 'em."

The two detectives ran after the engine. The car was shunted onto a siding.

But just as the detectives were within twenty yards of the car a lithe form was seen to leap down from the car door on the opposite side.

A man started at full speed across the freight yard.

Of course the car intervened between him and the detectives.

But Young King Brady gave chase.

It was a question of speed and endurance.

Old King Brady reached the car just as a second man leaped out.

It was Handsome Charlie.

Meg Mullins was yet in the car.

"Yield!" cried Old King Brady, rushing upon him.

"There's no chance for you, Dunn. This is the end!"

"Never!" gritted the villain, drawing a knife. "Get out of my way!"

But Old King Brady was upon him like an avalanche.

He gripped the wrist holding the knife.

Then followed a terrible struggle.

Old King Brady was a powerful man.

So was Handsome Charlie.

Moreover, Meg Mullins now came to his assistance.

"Hold onto him, Charlie!" she screamed. "Don't give up! I'll fix him!"

There was a dagger in the woman's hand.

It would have been a fatal thing for Old King Brady if she had been permitted to use it.

But the old detective saw her game.

He was not disposed to meet death in any such manner. With a powerful effort he turned Handsome Charlie's wrist.

The crook, with a snarl of pain, dropped his knife with a clatter onto the track.

Then Old King Brady hurled him back and turned just in time to meet the attack of the woman.

A blow would have stretched her senseless at his feet.

But Old King Brady could not strike a woman. With a quick movement he dodged her blow.

Then he grasped her wrist and gave it a sharp wrench.

The knife flew away, while she gave a scream of pain. But Handsome Charlie now sprang upon the detective again.

It was evident that the two crooks meant to finish Old King Brady if they could.

But the old detective was more than a match for them.

He had his second wind now and met Dunn like a tiger. He seized the big crook by the waist.

In another moment Dunn was off his feet.

Down he went upon the rails with a crash. So hard did he fall that he lay there, stunned and helpless.

Then Meg started to flee.

But Old King Brady overtook her in one bound.

"Not so fast, my fine lady," said the old detective, with a chuckle. "You have taken your last flight."

He clutched her by the shoulder and brought her to a halt.

Then, swift as thought, he had the handcuffs upon her. She was helpless.

Old King Brady now ran back and handcuffed Dunn. Then as the villain gained his feet he handcuffed Meg to him.

The game was up.

The hard fight was over.

The Bradys had won.

Dunn and Meg saw that their game was at its end. Therefore they yielded in good spirit.

Old King Brady now turned to look for Harry and his game.

They were not in sight.

Young King Brady had started to outspurt Joe Bentley. It was a fine race.

Bentley had once been a professional foot-racer.

Young King Brady was an athlete of no mean merit, but he found his best powers taxed to their utmost.

Across the yard went pursuer and pursued. Bentley turned into a street which ran parallel with the railroad.

Here was a long straight stretch.

There was no covert or place for the villain to pursue the slip. He must trust to his ability to acknowledge and outrun his enemy.

Young King Brady saw his advantage and hastened to make the best of it.

Every moment now was precious.

The young detective began to gain.

Slowly at first, but surely, he crept upon his bird—near and nearer.

Now he was almost at his shoulder.

Bentley heard him and knew that the race was almost ended.

But he kept on.

"You might as well give up, Bentley," said the young detective, tersely. "I can outrun you. The race is mine."

"It ain't won yet," hissed the villain. "My chance is still good."

Young King Brady put out his right hand and gripped the fellow's shoulder.

The result was quick and surprising. Quick as a flash Bentley stopped.

Young King Brady, who was unprepared for this, fell full tilt into Bentley, who stooped, and the young detective turned a complete somersault over him.

Then the villain came very near to making a finish on Young King Brady.

He grabbed an iron coupling-pin which chanced to be in the road.

With this dangerous weapon he rushed upon the young detective.

Young King Brady had not been injured by the fall. That he was surprised goes without saying.

But he saw the coming attack of his foe just in time.

The next moment might have been his last, for if Bentley had struck him with the iron bar the chances were good that he would have been rendered helpless, if not actually killed.

He leaped half to his feet.

Bentley rushed upon him and swung the iron bar over his head. But Young King Brady, quick as a flash, dodged between the villain's legs. The bar flew from Bentley's grasp with the force of the swing.

Then, almost before the villain knew it, Young King Brady had him on his back.

The handcuffs were snapped upon his wrists and he was helpless.

The game was up.

Bentley surrendered.

"Get up on your feet," said the young detective, "I won't rob any more Pullman cars right away."

"We gave you a hard fight," said the villain.

"I'll agree to that," said Young King Brady; "but the Bradys have won it."

"Accept my congratulations," said Bentley, with a scornful look. "We may turn another card in this game yet."

"Not if we know it."

Young King Brady marched his prisoner back to the station. There Old King Brady had Meg Mullins and Dunn all secure.

But there was a quick consultation as to what had better be done. Another train going east would not be along for two hours.

The detectives decided to take the hand car and go back and pick up Hall where they had left him with the railroad men.

This was done.

The railroad men, it is needless to say, were glad to see the detectives and to know that they had been successful.

The rest of the story may be briefly given.

In due time the Pullman car crooks were lodged safe in the Tombs in New York.

All got long sentences to Sing Sing, where they may be to-day.

The Bradys, on arriving in New York, telegraphed Mr. and Mrs. Warren Delancey, of Philadelphia, and they emerged from their temporary concealment. They were glad to know that the crooks had been run to earth.

The detectives met Mr. Pullman in the office of the Chief of the Secret Service. The Bradys received a large reward. And this ends the story of the Bradys' Hard Fight.

THE END.

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